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## PREFACE

By way of preparing a fourth or fifth form for the writing of an English essay, it is my practice three times a term to devote two consecutive three-quarter-hour periods to the close and careful analysis of a short essay by some good English author. After this has been done, in the next two periods the class is set to write an essay on some kindred subject : and so we secure an intensive and very useful morning's work on English composition.

Having set the essay to be analysed, I leave my pupils to read it through two or three times and grapple with the analysis of the subject-matter. Half an hour afterwards I set out on my tour round from desk to desk to inspect the beginnings, and correct important mistakes which are already appearing in the larger outlines, perhaps, or in the arrangement of sub-headings. At the close of this part of the lesson I usually dictate my own attempt at analysis, to be kept for possible use on some future occasion. This occasion arises, perhaps, two or three months later, when my pupils are asked to write an essay on the lines of the dictated scheme, using their own language and introducing their own instances and amplifications.

There can be no doubt that this is a valuable method of teaching the logical arrangement of thoughts in an organically constructed essay. But I have met with



considerable difficulty in carrying out my plan because I have found no book which contained only the kind of essay I wanted to serve as models : i. e. essays on suitable subjects by good writers, which were short and orderly in construction. The essays I want are such as, in subject-matter, are within the powers of my boys and yet calculated to make them think, and even think hard ; in length, will bear some relation to the essays they will be expected to write ; in style, will be helpful ; and in construction, will not lead the young writer to suppose that any haphazard and rambling presentment of his thoughts is all he need aim at. More or less at a venture I placed in the hands of my pupils one of the collections of essays made for the ordinary reading public : but we soon exhausted the usefulness of this volume, because of the essays very few—so I found on attempting to analyse them—yielded the logical form of scheme I was particularly anxious to secure. A few that serve my purpose I have included in this little volume : the others here printed have had to be sought for diligently. I hope the essays in this book will prove to combine fairly successfully, in varying degrees, the educational merits of suitable subjects, reasonable compass, sound style, and logical construction. If they attain these ends they cannot fail to be useful in the teaching of English composition to fourth and fifth, and even sixth forms ; and equally so, according to my experience, with adult classes such as those of the Workers' Educational Association. Some twenty or twenty-five essays will probably provide all that is wanted for a two-years' course on these lines :

but that the teacher may not be obliged too often to return on his own tracks I have included fifty essays. They will be found to deal with a variety of topics, so that when, for example, the subject of the essay the teacher intends to set is political or literary, he may set his pupils to analyse a political or literary model. They will also be found to vary considerably as to ease or difficulty of subject-matter and of analysis: in some the subject-matter and its arrangement will give little trouble, while in others they must be sternly wrestled with. If many of these essays appear to the teacher hard for boys of sixteen or seventeen, I would refer him to Nos. 18 and 38 in this selection. *Vexatio dat intellectum*—that is the principle on which I rely. I have appended ten specimens of analysis which I hope may be useful: five are assigned to the difficult condensed essays of Bacon. There are three indexes: one of subjects arranged under broad headings; a second of authors; and a third of subjects treated in the essays. This last is intended to be useful to the young essayist in search of an idea or two with which to start a train of thought.

It is probable that in the near future the values of educational subjects in England will be submitted to careful revision from a national point of view. I am convinced of the supreme importance for all English boys and girls of one subject—thinking and expressing thought clearly in English. To this end I believe there is no better means than the close study of the thought and expression of good essayists. By this method the pupil more or less unconsciously gets suggestive glimpses down new and

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# SHORT ESSAYS FOR SCHOOLS

## 1

### THE PURPOSE OF ART

(HERBERT SPENCER, 1820-1903)

THE educational mania, having for its catchwords 'Enlightenment, Information, Instruction', tends in all ways to emphasize this erroneous identification of mind with intellect; and consequently affects the estimates men make of various mental activities and mental products. Among other results it vitiates their conceptions of Art and the purpose of Art: using the word Art in the sense now generally accepted as comprehensive of all works of creative imagination. In this sphere, as in other spheres, there is under-valuation of the emotional element in mind and over-valuation of the intellectual element.

Merely alluding to the unended controversy concerning dramatic art, which has all along turned upon the question whether the stage-representations of life are or are not instructive, as though the production of pleasure were of no account, I may note that in poetry we may see this bringing to the front of thought instead of feeling: instance the dictum of Mr. Matthew Arnold that 'it is by a large, free, and sound representation of things, that poetry, *this high criticism of life*, has truth of substance'. Not the arousing of certain sentiments, but the communication of certain ideas is thus represented as the poet's office.

With pictorial representation the like has happened. Artists seek to magnify their office on the ground that art is useful for intellectual culture : that reason being the only one assigned. Years ago my attention was drawn to this mistaken conception by a disquisition with which Mr. Holman Hunt accompanied an exhibited picture—'Christ in the Workshop' it may have been. The educational value of Art was the theme of his proem<sup>1</sup>. By implication it appeared that it is not enough for a picture to gratify the aesthetic perceptions or raise a pleasurable emotion. It must teach something. The yielding of satisfaction to certain feelings is not regarded as an aim to be put in the foreground, but the primary aim must be instruction. Recently in a lecture delivered before the Ruskin Society of Birmingham by the editor of *The Studio*, I found an expression of the same belief. The words used were : 'The mission of art is to elevate the intelligence and gratify its longings.'

And now the same thing is happening in respect of music. This, too, is to be regarded as an intellectual exercise. It is an appeal to mind ; and mind being conceived as intellect it is an appeal to intellect. A composer must write to express not feelings, but enlightening ideas, and the listener must seek out and appreciate these ideas. The avowed theory of Wagner was that the purpose of music is to teach. He held certain conceptions of life and considered his operas as vehicles for those conceptions and as agents for propagating them. Some kindred belief is implied by a distinguished disciple over here, who repudiates the supposition that music is to be conceived simply as a source of pleasure. On another side we see a kindred idea. Musical critics often give applause to compositions as being 'scientific'—as being meri-

<sup>1</sup> Preface, Introduction.

torious not in respect of the emotions they arouse, but as appealing to the cultured intelligence of the musician.

As implied above, I hold these to be perverted beliefs having their roots in the prevailing enormous error respecting the constitution of mind. In that part of life concerned with music, as in other parts of life, the intellect is the minister and the emotions the things ministered to. Doubtless certain amounts of intellectual perception, implying appropriate culture, are needful for making possible the pleasurable feelings which music is capable of producing. These, however, are but means to an end, and it is a profound mistake to regard them as the end itself. An analogy will help us here. Before there can be sympathy there must have been gained some knowledge of the natural language of the emotions—what tones and changes of voice, what facial expressions, what movements of the body, signify certain states of mind. But the knowledge of this natural language does not constitute sympathy. There may be clear perception of the meanings of all these traits without any production of fellow feeling. Similarly, then, with the distinction between the knowledge of musical expression in its complex developments, and the experience of those emotions to which the musical expression is instrumental. Only in so far as its cultivated perceptions form a means to that excitement of the feelings which the composer intended to produce, does the intellect properly play a part; and even then, in playing its indispensable part, it is apt to interfere unduly. Many years ago, in the days when I had free admission for two to the Royal Italian Opera, and when, as mentioned in her *Life*, I frequently took George Eliot as my companion, I remember once remarking to her how much the tendency to analyse the effects we were



listening to deducted from the enjoyment of them : my remark calling forth full assent. Consciousness having at any moment but a limited capacity, it results that part of its area cannot be occupied in one way without decreasing the area which can be occupied in another way. The antagonism between intellectual appreciation and emotional satisfaction is essentially the same as one which lies at the root of our mental structure—the antagonism between sensation and perception ; and it runs up throughout the whole content of mind, rising to such partial conflicts between thought and feeling as those which accompany critical judgements of music.

When we come to the alleged higher meaning of music—to that instruction which a composer is assumed to utter and the listener to comprehend—we have yet a further interference with the true end. The intellectual element intrudes still more on the emotional element. In proportion as the listener, instead of being a passive recipient becomes an active interpreter, in that proportion does he lose the kind of consciousness which it is the purpose of the art to produce. If, like Mr. Ernest Newman, he thinks music good in proportion as it ' adds something to our knowledge of life ' and, while listening, seeks for such knowledge, he will lose that which the music should give him, and, as I believe, will get nothing instead.

Any culture-effect which may rightly be recognized must be consequent on the excitement of the superior emotions. Music may appeal to crude and coarse feelings or to refined and noble ones ; and in so far as it does the latter it awakens the higher nature and works an effect, though but a transitory effect, of a beneficial kind. But the primary purpose of music is neither instruction nor culture, but pleasure ; and this is an all-sufficient purpose.

## THE SOURCES OF ARCHITECTURAL TYPES

(HERBERT SPENCER, 1820-1903)

WHEN lately looking through the gallery of the Old Water-Colour Society, I was struck with the incongruity produced by putting regular architecture into irregular scenery. In one case, where the artist had introduced a perfectly symmetrical Grecian edifice into a mountainous and somewhat wild landscape, the discordant effect was particularly marked. 'How very unpicturesque,' said a lady to her friend, as they passed; showing that I was not alone in my opinion. Her phrase, however, set me speculating. Why unpicturesque? Picturesque means, like a picture—like what men choose for pictures. Why then should this be not fit for a picture?

Thinking the matter over, it seemed to me that the artist had sinned against that unity which is essential to a good picture. When the other constituents of a landscape have irregular forms, any artificial structure introduced must have an irregular form, that it may seem *part* of the landscape. The same general character must pervade it and surrounding objects; otherwise it, and the scene amid which it stands, become not *one* thing but *two* things; and we say it looks out of place. Or, speaking psychologically, the associated ideas called up by a building with its wings, windows, and all its parts symmetrically disposed, differ widely from the ideas associated with an entirely irregular landscape; and the one set of ideas tends to banish the other.

Pursuing the train of thought, sundry illustrative facts came to my mind. I remembered that a castle, which is

more irregular in outline than any other kind of building, pleases us most when seated amid crags and precipices ; while a castle on a plain seems an incongruity<sup>1</sup>. The partly regular and partly irregular forms of our old farm-houses, and our gabled gothic manors and abbeys, appear quite in harmony with an undulating, wooded country. In towns we prefer symmetrical architecture ; and in towns it produces in us no feeling of incongruity, because all surrounding things—men, horses, vehicles—are symmetrical also.

And here I was reminded of a notion that has frequently recurred to me ; namely, that there is some relationship between the several kinds of architecture and the several classes of natural objects. Buildings in the Greek and Roman styles seem, in virtue of their symmetry, to take their type from animal life. In the partly irregular Gothic, ideas derived from the vegetable world appear to predominate. And wholly irregular buildings, such as castles, may be considered as having inorganic forms for their basis.

Whimsical as this speculation looks at first sight, it is countenanced by numerous facts. The connexion between symmetrical architecture and animal forms may be inferred from the *kind* of symmetry we expect, and are satisfied with, in regular buildings. Thus in a Greek temple we require that the front shall be symmetrical in itself, and that the two flanks shall be alike ; but we do not look for uniformity between the flanks and the front, nor between the front and the back. The identity of this symmetry with that found in animals is obvious. Again, why is it that a building making any pretension to symmetry displeases us if not quite symmetrical ? Probably

<sup>1</sup> Absurdity, a case of want of fitness.

the reply will be—Because we see that the designer's idea is not fully carried out ; and that hence our love of completeness is offended. But then there come the further questions—How do we know that the architect's conception was symmetrical ? Whence comes this notion of symmetry which we have, and which we attribute to him ? Unless we fall back upon the old doctrine of innate ideas, we must admit that the idea of bilateral symmetry is derived from without ; and to admit this is to admit that it is derived from the higher animals.

That there is some relationship between Gothic architecture and vegetable forms is a position generally admitted. The often-remarked analogy between a groined nave and an avenue of trees with interlacing branches, shows that the fact has forced itself on men's observation. It is not only in this analogy, however, that the kinship is seen. It is seen still better in the essential characteristic of Gothic ; namely, what is termed its *aspiring* tendency. That predominance of vertical lines which so strongly distinguishes Gothic from other styles, is the most marked peculiarity of trees, when compared with animals or rocks. To persons of active imagination, a tall Gothic tower, with its elongated apertures and clusters of thin projections running from bottom to top, suggests a vague notion of growth.

Of the alleged connexion between inorganic forms and the wholly irregular and the castellated styles of building, we have, I think, some proof in the fact that when an edifice is irregular, the *more* irregular it is the more it pleases us. I see no way of accounting for this fact, save by supposing that the greater the irregularity the more strongly are we reminded of the inorganic forms typified, and the more vividly are aroused the agreeable ideas

of rugged and romantic scenery associated with those forms.

Further evidence of these several relationships of styles of architecture to classes of natural objects, is supplied by the kinds of decoration they respectively represent. The public buildings of Greece, while characterized in their outlines by the bilateral symmetry seen in the higher animals, have their pediments and entablatures covered with sculptured men and beasts. Egyptian temples and Assyrian palaces, while similarly symmetrical in their general plan, are similarly ornamented on their walls and at their doors. In Gothic, again, with its grove-like ranges of clustered columns, we find rich foliated ornaments abundantly employed. And accompanying the totally irregular, inorganic outlines of old castles, we see neither vegetable nor animal decorations. The bare, rock-like walls are surmounted by battlements, consisting of almost plain blocks, which remind us of the projections on the edge of a rugged cliff.

But perhaps the most significant fact is the harmony that may be observed between each type of architecture and the scenes in which it is indigenous. For what is the explanation of this harmony, unless it be that the predominant character of surrounding things has, in some way, determined the mode of building adopted?

That the harmony exists is clear. Equally in the cases of Egypt, Assyria, Greece, and Rome, town life preceded the construction of the symmetrical buildings that have come down to us. And town life is one in which, as already observed, the majority of familiar objects are symmetrical. We instinctively feel the naturalness of this association. Out amid the fields, a formal house,

with a central door flanked by an equal number of windows to right and left, strikes us as unrural—looks as though transplanted from a street ; and we cannot look at one of those stuccoed villas, with mock windows carefully arranged to balance the real ones, without being reminded of the suburban residence of a retired tradesman.

In styles indigenous in the country, we not only find the general irregularity characteristic of surrounding things, but we may trace some kinship between each kind of irregularity and the local circumstances. We see the broken rocky masses amid which castles are commonly placed, mirrored in their stern, inorganic forms. In abbeys, and such-like buildings, which are commonly found in comparatively sheltered districts, we find no such violent dislocations of masses and outlines ; and the nakedness appropriate to the fortress is replaced by decorations reflecting the neighbouring woods. Between a Swiss cottage and a Swiss view there is an evident relationship. The angular roof, so bold and so disproportionately large when compared to other roofs, reminds one of the adjacent mountain peaks ; and the broad overhanging eaves have a sweep and inclination like those of the lower branches of a pine tree. Consider, too, the apparent kinship between the flat roofs that prevail in Eastern cities, interspersed with occasional minarets, and the plains that commonly surround them, dotted here and there by palm trees. You cannot contemplate a picture of one of these places, without being struck by the predominance of horizontal lines, and their harmony with the wide-stretch of the landscape.

That the congruity here pointed out should hold in every case must not be expected. The Pyramids, for

example, do not seem to come under this generalization. Their repeated horizontal lines do indeed conform to the flatness of the neighbouring desert ; but their general contour seems to have no adjacent analogue. Considering, however, that migrating races, carrying their architectural systems with them, would naturally produce buildings having no relationship to their new localities ; and that it is not always possible to distinguish styles which are indigenous, from those which are naturalized ; numerous anomalies must be looked for.

The general idea above illustrated will perhaps be somewhat misinterpreted. Possibly some will take the proposition to be that men *intentionally* gave to their buildings the leading characteristics of neighbouring objects. But this is not what is meant. I do not suppose that they did so in times past, any more than they do so now. The hypothesis is, that in their choice of forms men are unconsciously influenced by the forms encircling them. That flat-roofed, symmetrical architecture should have originated in the East, among pastoral tribes surrounded by their herds and by wide plains, seems to imply that the builders were swayed by the horizontality and symmetry to which they were habituated. And the harmony which we have found to exist in other cases between indigenous styles and their localities, implies the general action of like influences. Indeed, on considering the matter psychologically, I do not see how it could well be otherwise. For as all conceptions must be made up of images, and parts of images, received through the senses—as it is impossible for a man to conceive any design save one of which the elements have come into his mind from without ; and as his imagination will most readily run in the direction of his habitual perceptions ; it follows, almost

necessarily, that the characteristic which predominates in these habitual perceptions must impress itself on his design.

## 3

## ARTISTIC v. COMMERCIAL

(FROM *The Times*)

THE secretary of the Amateur Printers' Association, in a letter which we published the other day, remarked that very little could be done to improve the output of really artistic printing until there were more amateur printers busy in our midst. What this means—and it applies to many things besides printing—is that those who try to do really good work cannot expect to make a living by it. They must produce for the pleasure of producing, not because the public wants what they produce. There is a sharp distinction between things that are made to sell and things that are made because the maker takes a pleasure in his work. Pleasure and business are not to be combined in such matters, and only business can expect to be profitable. This state of things is commonly spoken of as if it were the result of a law of nature; but it is really only the result of a modern indifference to good work. In the eighteenth century, for instance, which was not a great artistic period, there was a large public which recognized good work and was ready to pay for it. The great furniture makers, for instance, such as Chippendale and Sheraton, were not amateurs. They both enjoyed their work and lived by it, and there were hundreds of smaller men who did the same. So it was with porcelain, silver, bookbinding, and many other crafts. They may not have been at their best, but there



was a standard of sound workmanship in all of them ; and that existed because the public demand maintained it. We are accustomed to attribute the decline in all these things to the tyranny of machinery, but that is a mere phrase which explains nothing. Tyrannies exist because of some weakness in the subjects of them. Machinery is not a tyrant to those whom it supplies with things which they could not afford if they were hand-made, but only to those who, if they chose, could afford something better than machinery can supply. It has become a tyrant through their indifference to good work, by reason of which the standard of craftsmanship has been so lowered that those who want good work often cannot find it, or have to pay an exorbitant price for it.

We talk of the law of demand and supply as if there were always some irresistible and mechanical force behind its operation. But demand in many things is merely the result of human will. There are, and have always been, for the last hundred years, plenty of people able to pay for good workmanship if they chose to do so ; and they have paid vast sums of money for good workmanship in their clothes. Machinery has not destroyed the craft of the fashionable tailor or dressmaker ; good cutters still make good incomes because the well-to-do recognize their skill. If they had kept the same appreciation of skill in a hundred different crafts, those crafts would not have died out or degenerated. Take, for instance, the case of printing, which we have already discussed from another point of view. It is well, of course, that there should be cheap books for those who could not buy them if they were not cheap ; but that is no reason why all books should be cheap. The demand for finely printed books is not large enough to pay the producers of them,

merely because the well-to-do public does not care enough for fine printing to pay for it. It prefers to spend its money on other things, and has been so long indifferent to the quality of printing that now it does not know good from bad, and has a vague notion that there is only a mysterious and arbitrary distinction between 'artistic' printing and 'commercial'. The amateur produces the one for himself and a few faddists. The man of business produces the other for every one else.

This distinction between artistic and commercial, again, is not in the least necessary, and only exists because the public will not pay for good workmanship. The common use of the vague word artistic is a proof of a vague common desire for something which commerce at present does not supply. That something is usually only good design and good workmanship; and the one cannot flourish without the other. The public which will not pay for good workmanship is still less ready to pay for good design, for usually it does not even recognize the designer's existence, except in the matter of clothes. It thinks of him as an unnecessary artist, whereas he is really the man who makes what he designs fit for its purpose, and he is no more unnecessary in the case of printing or furniture than in the case of motor-cars. It is true, of course, that we can make use of old designs in the former case; but that is only because we have not the same eager desire for perfection in our printing or furniture as in our motor-cars. If we had we should see that there is always something spiritless and imitative in the reproduction of old designs, something not perfectly suited to our contemporary wants and tastes. A new motor-car is likely to be a far more beautiful thing than a copy of an old piece of furniture, because it is so perfectly fitted to its purpose,

and because it expresses a real eagerness of invention and a real pride of workmanship. Yet no one calls it artistic because it is produced in answer to a commercial demand, and it is made for use, not beauty. So if we forgot the distinction between commercial and artistic in furniture and other things, if we took a pride in their good workmanship and perfect fitness for their purpose, and if we were ready to pay for these qualities as in the case of motor-cars, we should soon have them as good as they were in the eighteenth century, and as full of character. But so long as good workmanship and design are only attempted by amateurs, because the public will not pay for them, those amateurs, for all their devotion, will not be able to compete with the professionals of the past. There will be no public demand to preserve them from personal caprice. Their works will remain consciously artistic, making a protest against commercial vulgarity, and they will be artificially preserved from the necessary benefits as well as the unnecessary evils of competition.

## 4

## TASTE AND ITS STANDARDS

(FROM *The Times*)

Is there any criterion of right and wrong in matters of taste? The average man would probably answer without hesitation in the negative. 'Every one to his taste,' he would say. The saying has passed into a proverb which has its counterpart in other languages. And yet, if we reflect a little, we must fain acknowledge that criticism of all kinds implies as its fundamental postulate that in matters of taste there is such a thing as right and

wrong, just as there is in morals. It is true that criticism has often proved to be wrong in its deliverances, as when Keats was bidden 'back to his gallipots', and Jeffrey wrote petulantly of Wordsworth, 'This will never do.' But the very fact that these early judgements have been by common consent reversed proves only that criticism, especially contemporary criticism, is not infallible, and at least implies, if it does not prove, that there is such a thing as right and wrong in matters of taste. In point of fact, however strongly a man may claim to be antinomian<sup>1</sup> in matters of taste, if he prefers such a picture as Frith's 'Derby Day' to any of the masterpieces of Titian, Raphael, or Velasquez; if he prefers a modern musical comedy to *As You Like It*, or a trumpery melodrama to such a tragedy as *Hamlet* or *Othello*; if he prefers a commonplace piece of popular music to a Concerto of Bach or a Symphony of Beethoven; even if, in respect of the pleasures of sense, he prefers a glass of gin and water to the finest growths of the Côte d'Or, the Gironde, or the Rhine; we should all agree that he is a man of indifferent taste, and in nine cases out of ten he would probably say the same himself. Or—to take another illustration from the appreciation of natural scenery—there has lately been some discussion in certain quarters as to whether Humboldt was right in pronouncing a certain view in the Island of Teneriffe on the road between Santa Cruz and Orotava to be the finest view in the world. Here individual predilection would seem to come in at its highest. There is nothing about which men differ so much as about the beauty of different kinds of natural scenery. Yet merely to raise the question implies that there is some canon or criterion to which

<sup>1</sup> Opposed to ordinary views, unconventional, irregular.

all men of good taste would defer, and by which, if once recognized and established, they would all agree to abide.

It may be argued that the question is begged by saying 'all men of good taste'. But that is not really so. We all acknowledge that, in matters of conduct, there is a definite standard of right and wrong. But although this abstract standard of morals is recognized as supreme and indefeasible<sup>1</sup>, yet even here there are many concrete cases and questions about which good men might well feel a difficulty as to the right course of conduct to pursue. Aristotle long ago pointed out that in such cases the only criterion is the judgement of the right-thinking man, of the man whose habitual right conduct has endowed him with a right judgement. The same idea is expressed in more spiritual fashion by the canon of the Gospel, 'If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine'. It is true that a perversion of this doctrine has given rise to the so-called science of casuistry<sup>2</sup>, and casuistry has no good repute among right-thinking men. But there is a sound casuistry as well as an unsound, and no man can be said to have had a very wide ethical experience if his own conscience has never been confronted with a concrete conflict between right and right in the abstract. In like manner in the domain of taste, which is a much less important and less explored field than that of morals, there is a sphere within which the standard of good and bad taste is fixed and irrevocable, surrounded by a much larger sphere in which the standard is much more flexible and indeterminate. Thus the analogy between taste and

<sup>1</sup> Not to be destroyed, always valid.

<sup>2</sup> The science of determining whether particular actions are right or wrong.

morals seems to be a very close one, except that, for obvious reasons, the sphere in which the absolute standard operates without serious question is much larger in the domain of conduct than it is in that of taste. Every man must recognize some standard of conduct if he is to live at peace with his neighbours, and indeed with himself. But whether he should also have a sound standard of taste is a question which mainly concerns himself. Yet it is hardly too much to say that, if it had been as important to the affairs and relations of men to have a right standard in taste as it is to have a right standard in conduct, there might long ago have been as large and general a consensus in matters of taste as there has long been in matters of morals.

How then are we to determine what is right or wrong in matters of taste? Here the analogy of morals helps us again. Just as in difficult questions of morals the right-thinking man—the man whose conduct has enlightened his judgement, and whose judgement, so enlightened, has in turn refined his conduct—is best fitted to decide, so in matters of taste the man of good taste is also best fitted to decide. Good taste is partly an inborn gift, and partly one that may, and indeed must, be cultivated by practice and study. Just as there are men born with a native bias towards virtue, so there are men born with a native gift of good taste. But in each case practice and the study of great examples are needed to refine and perfect the native gift. It is therefore no complete theory of taste to say that, although there is a general consensus in matters of right and wrong, yet in matters of taste there is no such thing, that tastes vary from age to age, that that which delights one generation fails even to attract the next, and that even the best of critics some-

times make egregious mistakes. The answer is that some things delight all generations, that critics are all agreed on certain points, and that these are the materials on which all good taste must be based. All critics are agreed, for example, that Homer, Sophocles, Virgil, Dante, and Shakespeare are among the greatest poets of the world ; and any man who disputes that judgement is manifestly out of court. *Securus iudicat orbis terrarum*. The judgement of the world, rectified and refined from generation to generation, is final and brooks no appeal. Contemporary judgements, even those of critics of high repute, are often false, misguided, and misleading. But in the case of the great creations of the human spirit, whether in literature, art, or music, all criticism which is shallow, ephemeral, capricious, or perverse is slowly dissolved away by time, and there is left the pure gold of universal and undisputed appreciation. It is thus only by the study of the great creations of the human spirit that an unimpeachably good taste can be acquired. That is the best corrective of antinomianism in taste, just as the study of high thoughts, and the contemplation of noble deeds, are among the strongest safeguards against antinomianism in morals.

## 5

## ON A LANDSCAPE OF NICOLAS POUSSIN \*

(WILLIAM HAZLITT, 1778-1830)

And blind Orion hungry for the morn.

ORION, the subject of this landscape, was the classical Nimrod ; and is called by Homer, ' a hunter of shadows, himself a shade '. He was the son of Neptune ; and having lost an eye in some affray between the Gods and men,

was told that if he would go to meet the rising sun he would recover his sight. He is represented setting out on his journey, with men on his shoulders to guide him, a bow in his hand, and Diana in the clouds greeting him. He stalks along, a giant upon earth, and reels and falters in his gait, as if just awakened out of sleep, or uncertain of his way; you see his blindness, though his back is turned. Mists rise around him, and veil the sides of the green forests; earth is dank and fresh with dews, the 'grey dawn and the Pleiades before him dance', and in the distance are seen the blue hills and sullen ocean. Nothing was ever more finely conceived or done. It breathes the spirit of the morning; its moisture, its repose, its obscurity, waiting the miracle of light to kindle it into smiles; the whole is, like the principal figure in it, 'a forerunner of the dawn'. The same atmosphere tinges and imbues every object, the same dull light 'shadowy sets off' the face of nature: one feeling of vastness, of strangeness, and of primeval forms pervades the painter's canvas, and we are thrown back upon the first integrity of things. This great and learned man might be said to see nature through the glass of time; he alone has a right to be considered as the painter of classical antiquity. Sir Joshua has done him justice in this respect. He could give to the scenery of his heroic fables that unimpaired look of original nature, full, solid, large, luxuriant, teeming with life and power; or deck it with all the pomp of art, with temples and towers, and mythologic groves. His pictures 'denote a foregone conclusion'. He applies Nature to his purposes, works out her images according to the standard of his thoughts, embodies high fictions; and the first conception being given, all the rest seems to grow out of and be assimilated to it, by the unailing



process of a studious imagination. Like his own Orion, he overlooks the surrounding scene, appears to 'take up the isles as a very little thing, and to lay the earth in a balance'. With a laborious and mighty grasp, he puts Nature into the mould of the ideal and antique; and was among painters (more than any one else) what Milton was among poets. There is in both something of the same pedantry, the same stiffness, the same elevation, the same grandeur, the same mixture of art and nature, the same richness of borrowed materials, the same unity of character. Neither the poet nor the painter lowered the subjects they treated, but filled up the outline in the fancy, and added strength and reality to it; and thus not only satisfied, but surpassed the expectations of the spectator and the reader. This is held for the triumph and the perfection of works of art. To give us nature, such as we see it, is well and deserving of praise; to give us nature, such as we have never seen, but have often wished to see it, is better, and deserving of higher praise. He who can show the world in its first naked glory, with the hues of fancy spread over it, or in its high and palmy state, with the gravity of history stamped on the proud monuments of vanished empire,—who, by his 'so potent art', can recall time past, transport us to distant places, and join the regions of imagination (a new conquest) to those of reality,—who shows us not only what Nature ~~is~~, but what she has been, and is capable of,—he who does this, and does it with simplicity, with truth, and grandeur, is lord of Nature and her powers; and his mind is universal, and his art the master-art!

There is nothing in this 'more than natural', if criticism could be persuaded to think so. The historic painter does not neglect or contravene Nature, but follows her more

closely up into her fantastic heights or hidden recesses. He demonstrates what she would be in conceivable circumstances and under implied conditions. He 'gives to airy nothing a local habitation', not 'a name'. At his touch, words start up into images, thoughts become things. He clothes a dream, a phantom, with form and colour, and the wholesome attributes of reality. *His* art is a second nature; not a different one. There are those, indeed, who think that not to copy nature is the rule for attaining perfection. Because they cannot paint the objects which they have seen, they fancy themselves qualified to paint the ideas which they have not seen. But it is possible to fail in this latter and more difficult style of imitation, as well as in the former humbler one. The detection, it is true, is not so easy, because the objects are not so nigh at hand to compare, and therefore there is more room both for false pretension and for self-deceit. They take an epic motto or subject, and conclude that the spirit is implied as a thing of course. They paint inferior portraits, maudlin<sup>1</sup>, lifeless faces, without ordinary expression, or one look, feature, or particle of nature in them, and think that this is to rise to the truth of history. They vulgarize and degrade whatever is interesting or sacred to the mind, and suppose that they thus add to the dignity of their profession. They represent a face that seems as if no thought or feeling of any kind had ever passed through it, and would have you believe that this is the very sublime of expression, such as it would appear in heroes, or demigods of old, when rapture or agony was raised to its height. They show you a landscape that looks as if the sun never shone upon it, and tell you that it is not modern—that so earth looked when

<sup>1</sup> Sickly sentimental.

Titan first kissed it with his rays. This is not the true *ideal*. It is not to fill the moulds of the imagination, but to deface and injure them ; it is not to come up to, but to fall short of, the poorest conception in the public mind. Such pictures should not be hung in the same room with that of Orion.<sup>1</sup>

Poussin was, of all painters, the most poetical. He was the painter of ideas. No one ever told a story half so well, nor so well knew what was capable of being told by the pencil. He seized on, and struck off with grace and precision, just that point of view which would be likely to catch the reader's fancy. There is a significance, a consciousness in whatever he does (sometimes a vice, but oftener a virtue) beyond any other painter. His Giants sitting on the tops of craggy mountains, as huge themselves, and playing idly on their Pan's-pipes, seem

<sup>1</sup> Everything tends to show the manner in which a great artist is formed. If any person could claim an exemption from the careful imitation of individual objects, it was Nicolas Poussin. He studied the antique, but he also studied nature. 'I have often admired', says Vignuel de Marville, who knew him at a late period of his life, 'the love he had for his art. Old as he was, I frequently saw him among the ruins of ancient Rome, out in the Campagna, or along the banks of the Tyber, sketching a scene that had pleased him ; and I often met him with his handkerchief full of stones, moss, or flowers, which he carried home, that he might copy them exactly from nature. One day I asked him how he had attained to such a degree of perfection, as to have gained so high a rank among the great painters of Italy ? He answered, " I HAVE NEGLECTED NOTHING ".—See his *Life*, lately published. It appears from this account that he had not fallen into a recent error, that Nature puts the man of genius out. As a contrast to the foregoing description, I might mention, that I remember an old gentleman once asking Mr. West in the British Gallery if he had ever been at Athens ? To which the President made answer, No ; nor did he feel any great desire to go ; for that he thought he had as good an idea of the place from the Catalogue as he could get by living there for any number of years. What would he have said, if any one had told him, he could get as good an idea of the subject of one of his great works from reading the Catalogue of it, as from seeing the picture itself ? Yet the answer was characteristic of the genius of the painter.

to have been seated there these three thousand years, and to know the beginning and the end of their own story. An infant Bacchus or Jupiter is big with his future destiny. Even inanimate and dumb things speak a language of their own. His snakes, the messengers of fate, are inspired with human intellect. His trees grow and expand their leaves in the air, glad of the rain, proud of the sun, awake to the winds of heaven. In his Plague of Athens the very buildings seem stiff with horror. His picture of the Deluge is, perhaps, the finest historical landscape in the world. You see a waste of waters, wide, interminable; the sun is labouring, wan and weary, up the sky; the clouds, dull and leaden, lie like a load upon the eye, and heaven and earth seem commingling into one confused mass! His human figures are sometimes 'o'er-informed' with this kind of feeling. Their actions have too much gesticulation, and the set expression of the features borders too much on the mechanical and caricatured style. In this respect they form a contrast to Raphael's, whose figures never appear to be sitting for their pictures, or to be conscious of a spectator, or to have come from the painter's hand. In Nicolas Poussin, on the contrary, everything seems to have a distinct understanding with the artist; 'the very stones prate of their whereabouts'; each object has its part and place assigned, and is in a sort of compact with the rest of the picture. It is this conscious keeping, and, as it were, *internal* design, that gives their peculiar character to the works of this artist. There was a picture of Aurora in the British Gallery a year or two ago. It was a suffusion of golden light. The Goddess wore her saffron-coloured robes, and appeared just risen from the gloomy bed of old Tithonus. Her very steeds, milk-white, were tinged with the yellow dawn.

It was a personification of the morning. Poussin succeeded better in classic than in sacred subjects. The latter are comparatively heavy, forced, full of violent contrasts of colour, of red, blue, and black, and without the true prophetic inspiration of the characters. But in his pagan allegories and fables he was quite at home. The native gravity and native levity of the Frenchman were combined with Italian scenery and an antique gusto, and gave even to his colouring an air of learned indifference. He wants, in one respect, grace, form, expression ; but he has everywhere sense and meaning, perfect costume and propriety. His personages always belong to the class and time represented, and are strictly versed in the business in hand. His grotesque compositions in particular, his Nymphs and Fauns, are superior (at least, as far as style is concerned) even to those of Rubens. They are taken more immediately out of fabulous history. Rubens's Satyrs and Bacchantes have a more jovial and voluptuous aspect, are more drunk with pleasure, more full of animal spirits and riotous impulses ; they laugh and bound along---

Leaping like wanton kids in pleasant spring ;

but those of Poussin have more of the intellectual part of the character, and seem vicious on reflection, and of set purpose. Rubens's are noble specimens of a class ; Poussin's are allegorical abstractions of the same class ; with bodies less pampered, but with minds more secretly depraved. The Bacchanalian groups of the Flemish painter were, however, his masterpieces in composition. Witness those prodigies of colour, character, and expression at Blenheim. In the more chaste and refined delineation of classic fable, Poussin was without a rival. Rubens,

who was a match for him in the wild and picturesque, could not pretend to vie with the elegance and purity of thought in his picture of Apollo giving a poet a cup of water to drink, nor with the gracefulness of design in the figure of a nymph squeezing the juice of a bunch of grapes from her fingers (a rosy wine-press) which falls into the mouth of a chubby infant below. But, above all, who shall celebrate, in terms of fit praise, his picture of the shepherds in the Vale of Tempe going out in a fine morning of the spring, and coming to a tomb with this inscription : *ET EGO IN ARCADIA VIXI !* The eager curiosity of some, the expression of others who start back with fear and surprise, the clear breeze playing with the branches of the shadowing trees, 'the valleys low, where the mild zephyrs use', the distant, uninterrupted, sunny prospect speak (and for ever will speak on) of ages past to ages yet to come !<sup>1</sup>

Pictures are a set of chosen images, a stream of pleasant thoughts passing through the mind. It is a luxury to have the walls of our rooms hung round with them, and no less so to have such a gallery in the mind, to con over the relics of ancient art bound up 'within the book and volume of the brain, unmixed (if it were possible) with baser matter' ! A life passed among pictures, in the study and the love of art, is a happy noiseless dream : or rather, it is to dream and to be awake at the same time ; for it has all 'the sober certainty of waking bliss', with the romantic voluptuousness of a visionary and abstracted being. They are the bright consummate essences of

<sup>1</sup> Poussin has repeated this subject more than once, and appears to have revelled in its witcheries. I have before alluded to it, and may again. It is hard that we should not be allowed to dwell as often as we please on what delights us, when things that are disagreeable recur so often against our will.

things, and ' he who knows of these delights to taste and interpose them oft, is not unwise ! ' The Orion, which I have here taken occasion to descant upon, is one of a collection of excellent pictures, as this collection is itself one of a series from the old masters, which have for some years back embrowned the walls of the British Gallery, and enriched the public eye. What hues (those of nature mellowed by time) breathe around as we enter ! What forms are there, woven into the memory ! What looks, which only the answering looks of the spectator can express ! What intellectual stores have been yearly poured forth from the shrine of ancient art ! The works are various, but the names the same—heaps of Rembrandts frowning from the darkened walls, Rubens's glad gorgeous groups, Titians more rich and rare, Claudes always exquisite, sometimes beyond compare, Guido's endless cloying sweetness, the learning of Poussin and the Caracci, and Raphael's princely magnificence crowning all. We read certain letters and syllables in the Catalogue, and at the well-known magic sound a miracle of skill and beauty starts to view. One might think that one year's prodigal display of such perfection would exhaust the labours of one man's life ; but the next year, and the next to that, we find another harvest reaped and gathered in to the great garner of art, by the same immortal hands—

Old GENIUS the porter of them was ;  
He letteth in, he letteth out to wend.—

Their works seem endless as their reputation—to be many as they are complete—to multiply with the desire of the mind to see more and more of them ; as if there were a living power in the breath of Fame, and in the very names of the great heirs of glory ' there were propagation

too' ! It is something to have a collection of this sort to count upon once a year ; to have one last, lingering look yet to come. Pictures are scattered like stray gifts through the world ; and while they remain, earth has yet a little gilding left, not quite rubbed off, dishonoured, and defaced. There are plenty of standard works still to be found in this country, in the collections at Blenheim, at Burleigh, and in those belonging to Mr. Angerstein, Lord Grosvenor, the Marquis of Stafford, and others, to keep up this treat to the lovers of art for many years ; and it is the more desirable to reserve a privileged sanctuary of this sort, where the eye may dote, and the heart take its fill of such pictures as Poussin's Orion, since the Louvre is stripped of its triumphant spoils, and since he who collected it, and wore it as a rich jewel in his Iron Crown, the hunter of greatness and of glory, is himself a shade !

## 6

## THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

(EDWARD GIBBON, 1737-94)

THE military establishment of the Roman empire, which thus assured either its tranquillity or success, will now become the proper and important object of our attention.

In the purer ages of the commonwealth, the use of arms was reserved for those ranks of citizens who had a country to love, a property to defend, and some share in enacting those laws, which it was their interest as well as duty to maintain. But in proportion as the public freedom was lost in extent of conquest, war was gradually



improved into an art, and degraded into a trade. The legions themselves, even at the time when they were recruited in the most distant provinces, were supposed to consist of Roman citizens. That distinction was generally considered, either as a legal qualification, or as a proper recompense, for the soldier; but a more serious regard was paid to the essential merit of age, strength, and military stature. In all levies, a just preference was given to the climates of the north over those of the south: the race of men born to the exercise of arms was sought for in the country rather than in cities; and it was very reasonably presumed, that the hardy occupations of smiths, carpenters, and huntsmen, would supply more vigour and resolution, than the sedentary trades which are employed in the service of luxury. After every qualification of property had been laid aside, the armies of the Roman emperors were still commanded, for the most part, by officers of a liberal birth and education; but the common soldiers, like the mercenary troops of modern Europe, were drawn from the meanest, and very frequently from the most profligate of mankind.

That public virtue which, among the ancients, was denominated patriotism, is derived from a strong sense of our own interest in the preservation and prosperity of the free government of which we are members. Such a sentiment, which had rendered the legions of the republic almost invincible, could make but a very feeble impression on the mercenary servants of a despotic prince; and it became necessary to supply that defect by other motives, of a different, but not less forcible nature—honour and religion. The peasant, or mechanic, imbibed the useful prejudice that he was advanced to the more dignified

profession of arms, in which his rank and reputation would depend on his own valour ; and that, although the prowess of a private soldier must often escape the notice of fame, his own behaviour might sometimes confer glory or disgrace on the company, the legion, or even the army, to whose honours he was associated. On his first entrance into the service, an oath was administered to him, with every circumstance of solemnity. He promised never to desert his standard, to submit his own will to the command of his leaders, and to sacrifice his life for the safety of the emperor and the empire. The attachment of the Roman troops to their standard was inspired by the united influence of religion and of honour. The golden eagle, which glittered in the front of the legion, was the object of their fondest devotion ; nor was it esteemed less impious than it was ignominious, to abandon that sacred ensign in the hour of danger. These motives, which derived their strength from the imagination, were enforced by fears and hopes of a more substantial kind. Regular pay, occasional donatives, and a stated recompense after the appointed time of service, alleviated the hardships of the military life ; whilst, on the other hand, it was impossible for cowardice or disobedience to escape the severest punishment. The centurions were authorized to chastise with blows, the generals had a right to punish with death ; and it was an inflexible maxim of Roman discipline, that a good soldier should dread his officers far more than the enemy. From such laudable arts did the valour of the imperial troops receive a degree of firmness and docility, unattainable by the impetuous and irregular passions of barbarians.

And yet so sensible were the Romans of the imperfection of valour without skill and practice, that in their

language, the name of an army was borrowed from the word which signified exercise. Military exercises were the important and unremitted object of their discipline. The recruits and young soldiers were constantly trained both in the morning and in the evening, nor was age or knowledge allowed to excuse the veterans from the daily repetition of what they had completely learnt. Large sheds were erected in the winter-quarters of the troops, that their useful labours might not receive any interruption from the most tempestuous weather ; and it was carefully observed, that the arms destined to this imitation of war, should be of double the weight which was required in real action. It is not the purpose of this work to enter into any minute description of the Roman exercises. We shall only remark, that they comprehended whatever could add strength to the body, activity to the limbs, or grace to the motions. The soldiers were diligently instructed to march, to run, to leap, to swim, to carry heavy burdens, to handle every species of arms that was used either for offence or for defence, either in distant engagement, or in a closer onset ; to form a variety of evolutions ; and to move to the sound of flutes, in the Pyrrhic or martial dance. In the midst of peace, the Roman troops familiarized themselves with the practice of war ; and it is prettily remarked by an ancient historian who had fought against them, that the effusion of blood was the only circumstance which distinguished a field of battle from a field of exercise. It was the policy of the ablest generals, and even of the emperors themselves, to encourage these military studies by their presence and example ; and we are informed that Hadrian, as well as Trajan, frequently condescended to instruct the inexperienced soldiers, to reward the diligent, and some-

times to dispute with them the prize of superior strength or dexterity. Under the reigns of those princes, the science of tactics was cultivated with success ; and as long as the empire retained any vigour, their military instructions were respected as the most perfect model of Roman discipline.

Nine centuries of war had gradually introduced into the service many alterations and improvements. The legions, as they are described by Polybius, in the time of the Punic wars, differed very materially from those which achieved the victories of Caesar, or defended the monarchy of Hadrian and the Antonines. The constitution of the imperial legion may be described in a few words. The heavy-armed infantry, which composed its principal strength, was divided into ten cohorts, and fifty-five companies, under the orders of a correspondent number of tribunes and centurions. The first cohort, which always claimed the post of honour and the custody of the eagle, was formed of eleven hundred and five soldiers, the most approved for valour and fidelity. The remaining nine cohorts consisted each of five hundred and fifty-five ; and the whole body of legionary infantry amounted to six thousand one hundred men. Their arms were uniform, and admirably adapted to the nature of their service : an open helmet, with a lofty crest ; a breast-plate, or coat of mail ; greaves on their legs, and an ample buckler on their left arm. The buckler was of an oblong and concave figure, four feet in length, and two and a half in breadth, framed of a light wood, covered with a bull's hide, and strongly guarded with plates of brass. Besides a lighter spear, the legionary soldier grasped in his right hand the formidable *pilum*, a ponderous javelin, whose utmost length was about six feet, and which was terminated by

a massy triangular point of steel of eighteen inches. This instrument was indeed much inferior to our modern fire-arms ; since it was exhausted by a single discharge at the distance of only ten or twelve paces. Yet when it was launched by a firm and skilful hand, there was not any cavalry that durst venture within its reach, nor any shield or corslet that could sustain the impetuosity of its weight. As soon as the Roman had darted his *pilum*, he drew his sword, and rushed forwards to close with the enemy. His sword was a short well-tempered Spanish blade, that carried a double edge, and was alike suited to the purpose of striking or of pushing ; but the soldier was always instructed to prefer the latter use of his weapon, as his own body remained less exposed, whilst he inflicted a more dangerous wound on his adversary. The legion was usually drawn up eight deep ; and the regular distance of three feet was left between the files as well as ranks. A body of troops habituated to preserve this open order, in a long front and a rapid charge, found themselves prepared to execute every disposition which the circumstances of war or the skill of their leader might suggest. The soldier possessed a free space for his arms and motions, and sufficient intervals were allowed, through which seasonable reinforcements might be introduced to the relief of the exhausted combatants. The tactics of the Greeks and Macedonians were formed on very different principles. The strength of the phalanx depended on sixteen ranks of long pikes, wedged together in the closest array. But it was soon discovered by reflection, as well as by the event, that the strength of the phalanx was unable to contend with the activity of the legion.

The cavalry, without which the force of the legion would have remained imperfect, was divided into ten

troops of squadrons ; the first, as the companion of the first cohort, consisted of a hundred and thirty-two men ; whilst each of the other nine amounted only to sixty-six. The entire establishment formed a regiment, if we may use the modern expression, of seven hundred and twenty-six horse, naturally connected with its respective legion, but occasionally separated to act in the line, and to compose a part of the wings of the army. The cavalry of the emperors was no longer composed, like that of the ancient republic, of the noblest youths of Rome and Italy, who, by performing their military service on horseback, prepared themselves for the offices of senator and consul ; and solicited, by deeds of valour, the future suffrages of their countrymen. Since the alteration of manners and government, the most wealthy of the equestrian order were engaged in the administration of justice, and of the revenue : and whenever they embraced the profession of arms, they were immediately entrusted with a troop of horse, or a cohort of foot. Trajan and Hadrian formed their cavalry from the same provinces, and the same class of their subjects, which recruited the ranks of the legion. The horses were bred, for the most part, in Spain or Cappadocia. The Roman troopers despised the complete armour with which the cavalry of the east was encumbered. *Their* more useful arms consisted in a helmet, an oblong shield, light boots, and a coat of mail. A javelin, and a long broad-sword, were their principal weapons of offence. The use of lances, and of iron maces, they seem to have borrowed from the barbarians.

The safety and honour of the empire were principally entrusted to the legions ; but the policy of Rome condescended to adopt every useful instrument of war. Considerable levies were regularly made among the provincials,

who had not yet deserved the honourable distinction of Romans. Many dependent princes and communities, dispersed round the frontiers, were permitted, for a while, to hold their freedom and security by the tenure of military service. Even select troops of hostile barbarians were frequently compelled or persuaded to consume their dangerous valour in remote climates, and for the benefit of the state. All these were included under the general name of auxiliaries ; and howsoever they might vary according to the difference of times and circumstances, their numbers were seldom much inferior to those of the legions themselves. Among the auxiliaries, the bravest and most faithful bands were placed under the command of praefects and centurions, and severely trained in the arts of Roman discipline ; but the far greater part retained those arms to which the nature of their country, or their early habits of life, more peculiarly adapted them. By this institution, each legion, to whom a certain proportion of auxiliaries was allotted, contained within itself every species of lighter troops, and of missile weapons ; and was capable of encountering every nation, with the advantages of its respective arms and discipline. Nor was the legion destitute of what, in modern language, would be styled a train of artillery. It consisted in ten military engines of the largest, and fifty-five of a smaller size ; but all of which, either in an oblique or horizontal manner, discharged stones and darts with irresistible violence.

The camp of a Roman legion presented the appearance of a fortified city. As soon as the space was marked out, the pioneers carefully levelled the ground, and removed every impediment that might interrupt its perfect regularity. Its form was an exact quadrangle : and we might calculate, that a square of about seven hundred

yards was sufficient for the encampment of twenty thousand Romans ; though a similar number of our own troops would expose to the enemy a front of more than treble that extent. In the midst of the camp, the praetorium, or general's quarters, rose above the others ; the cavalry, the infantry, and the auxiliaries, occupied their respective stations ; the streets were broad, and perfectly straight, and a vacant space of two hundred feet was left on all sides, between the tents and the rampart. The rampart itself was usually twelve feet high, armed with a line of strong and intricate palisades, and defended by a ditch of twelve feet in depth as well as in breadth. This important labour was performed by the hands of the legionaries themselves ; to whom the use of the spade and the pickaxe was no less familiar than that of the sword or *pilum*. Active valour may often be the present of nature ; but such patient diligence can be the fruit only of habit and discipline.

Whenever the trumpet gave the signal of departure, the camp was almost instantly broke up, and the troops fell into their ranks without delay or confusion. Besides their arms, which the legionaries scarcely considered as an encumbrance, they were laden with their kitchen furniture, the instruments of fortification, and the provision of many days. Under this weight, which would oppress the delicacy of a modern soldier, they were trained by a regular step to advance, in about six hours, near twenty miles. On the appearance of an enemy, they threw aside their baggage, and by easy and rapid evolutions converted the column of march into an order of battle. The slingers and archers skirmished in the front ; the auxiliaries formed the first line, and were seconded or sustained by the strength of the legions : the cavalry covered the



flanks, and the military engines were placed in the rear.

Such were the arts of war, by which the Roman emperors defended their extensive conquests, and preserved a military spirit, at a time when every other virtue was oppressed by luxury and despotism. If, in the consideration of their armies, we pass from their discipline to their numbers, we shall not find it easy to define them with any tolerable accuracy. We may compute, however, that the legion, which was itself a body of six thousand eight hundred and thirty-one Romans, might, with its attendant auxiliaries, amount to about twelve thousand five hundred men. The peace establishment of Hadrian and his successors was composed of no less than thirty of these formidable brigades; and most probably formed a standing force of three hundred and seventy-five thousand men. Instead of being confined within the walls of fortified cities, which the Romans considered as the refuge of weakness or pusillanimity, the legions were encamped on the banks of the great rivers, and along the frontiers of the barbarians. As their stations, for the most part, remained fixed and permanent, we may venture to describe the distribution of the troops. Three legions were sufficient for Britain. The principal strength lay upon the Rhine and Danube, and consisted of sixteen legions, in the following proportions: two in the Lower, and three in the Upper Germany; one in Rhaetia, one in Noricum, four in Pannonia, three in Moesia, and two in Dacia. The defence of the Euphrates was entrusted to eight legions, six of whom were planted in Syria, and the other two in Cappadocia. With regard to Egypt, Africa, and Spain, as they were far removed from any important scene of war, a single legion main-

tained the domestic tranquillity of each of those great provinces. Even Italy was not left destitute of a military force. Above twenty thousand chosen soldiers, distinguished by the titles of city cohorts and praetorian guards watched over the safety of the monarch and the capital. As the authors of almost every revolution that distracted the empire, the praetorians will, very soon, and very loudly, demand our attention; but in their arms and institutions we cannot find any circumstance which discriminated them from the legions, unless it were a more splendid appearance, and a less rigid discipline.

## 7

THE STATE OF EUROPE AT THE TIME OF THE  
NORMAN INVASION

(EDMUND BURKE, 1729-97)

BEFORE the period of which we are going to treat, England was little known or considered in Europe. Their situation, their domestic calamities, and their ignorance, circumscribed the views and politics of the English within the bounds of their own island. But the Norman conqueror threw down all these barriers. The English laws, manners, and maxims, were suddenly changed; the scene was enlarged; and the communication with the rest of Europe, being thus opened, has been preserved ever since in a continued series of wars and negotiations. That we may therefore enter more fully into the matters which lie before us, it is necessary that we understand the state of the neighbouring continent at the time when this island first came to be interested in its affairs.

The northern nations, who had overrun the Roman

empire, were at first rather actuated by avarice than ambition, and were more intent upon plunder than conquest ; they were carried beyond their original purposes, when they began to form regular governments, for which they had been prepared by no just ideas of legislation. For a long time, therefore, there was little of order in their affairs, or foresight in their designs. The Goths, the Burgundians, the Franks, the Vandals, the Suevi, after they had prevailed over the Roman empire, by turns prevailed over each other in continual wars, which were carried on upon no principles of a determinate policy, entered into upon motives of brutality and caprice, and ended as fortune and rude violence chanced to prevail. Tumult, anarchy, confusion, overspread the face of Europe ; and an obscurity rests upon the transactions of that time, which suffers us to discover nothing but its extreme barbarity.

Before this cloud could be dispersed, the Saracens, another body of barbarians from the south, animated by a fury not unlike that which gave strength to the northern irruptions, but heightened by enthusiasm, and regulated by subordination and uniform policy, began to carry their arms, their manners, and religion, into every part of the universe. Spain was entirely overwhelmed by the torrent of their armies ; Italy, and the islands, were harassed by their fleets, and all Europe alarmed by their vigorous and frequent enterprises. Italy, who had so long sat the mistress of the world, was by turns the slave of all nations. The possession of that fine country was hotly disputed between the Greek emperor and the Lombards, and it suffered infinitely by that contention. Germany, the parent of so many nations, was exhausted by the swarms she had sent abroad.

However, in the midst of this chaos there were principles at work which reduced things to a certain form, and gradually unfolded a system, in which the chief movers and main springs were the papal and the imperial powers; the aggrandizement or diminution of which have been the drift of almost all the politics, intrigues, and wars, which have employed and distracted Europe to this day.

From Rome the whole western world had received its Christianity. She was the asylum of what learning had escaped the general desolation; and even in her ruins she preserved something of the majesty of her ancient greatness. On these accounts she had a respect and a weight which increased every day amongst a simple religious people, who looked but a little way into the consequences of their actions. The rudeness of the world was very favourable for the establishment of an empire of opinion. The moderation with which the popes at first exerted this empire, made its growth unfelt until it could no longer be opposed. And the policy of later popes, building on the piety of the first, continually increased it; and they made use of every instrument but that of force. They employed equally the virtues and the crimes of the great; they favoured the lust of kings for absolute authority, and the desire of subjects for liberty; they provoked war, mediated peace; and took advantage of every turn in the minds of men, whether of a public or private nature, to extend their influence, and push their power from ecclesiastical to civil; from subjection to independency; from independency to empire.

France had many advantages over the other parts of Europe. The Saracens had no permanent success in that country. The same hand which expelled those invaders, deposed the last of a race of heavy and degenerate

princes, more like eastern monarchs than German leaders, who had neither the force to repel the enemies of their kingdom, nor to assert their own sovereignty. This usurpation placed on the throne princes of another character; princes who were obliged to supply their want of title by the vigour of their administration. The French monarch had need of some great and respected authority to throw a veil over his usurpation, and to sanctify his newly-acquired power by those names and appearances which are necessary to make it respectable to the people. On the other hand, the pope, who hated the Grecian empire, and equally feared the success of the Lombards, saw with joy this new star arise in the north, and gave it the sanction of his authority. Presently after he called it to his assistance. Pepin passed the Alps, relieved the pope, and invested him with the dominion of a large country in the best part of Italy.

Charlemagne pursued the course which was marked out for him, and put an end to the Lombard kingdom, weakened by the policy of his father and the enmity of the popes, who never willingly saw a strong power in Italy. Then he received from the hand of the pope the imperial crown, sanctified by the authority of the holy see, and with it the title of emperor of the Romans; a name venerable from the fame of the old empire, which was supposed to carry great and unknown prerogatives; and thus the empire rose again out of its ruins in the West; and what is remarkable, by means of one of those nations which had helped to destroy it. If we take in the conquests of Charlemagne, it was also very near as extensive as formerly; though its constitution was altogether different, as being entirely on the northern model of government.

From Charlemagne the pope received in return an

enlargement and a confirmation of his new territory. Thus the papal and imperial powers mutually gave birth to each other. They continued for some ages, and in some measure still continue, closely connected, with a variety of pretensions upon each other, and on the rest of Europe.

Though the imperial power had its origin in France, it was soon divided into two branches, the Gallic and the German. The latter alone supported the title of empire ; but the power being weakened by this division, the papal pretensions had the greater weight. The pope, because he first revived the imperial dignity, claimed a right of disposing of it, or at least of giving validity to the election of the emperor. The emperor, on the other hand, remembering the rights of those sovereigns whose title he bore, and how lately the power, which insulted him with such demands, had arisen from the bounty of his predecessors, claimed the same privileges in the election of a pope. The claims of both were somewhat plausible ; and they were supported, the one by force of arms, and the other by ecclesiastical influence, powers which in those days were very nearly balanced. Italy was the theatre upon which this prize was disputed. In every city the parties in favour of each of the opponents were not far from an equality in their numbers and strength. Whilst these parties disagreed in the choice of a master, by contending for a choice in their subjection they grew imperceptibly into freedom, and passed through the medium of faction and anarchy into regular commonwealths. Thus arose the republics of Venice, of Genoa, of Florence, Sienna, and Pisa, and several others. These cities, established in this freedom, turned the frugal and ingenious spirit contracted in such communities to navigation and traffic ; and pursuing them with skill and vigour, whilst commerce

was neglected and despised by the rustic gentry of the martial governments, they grew to a considerable degree of wealth, power, and civility.

The Danes, who in this latter time preserved the spirit and the numbers of the ancient Gothic people, had seated themselves in England, in the Low Countries, and in Normandy. They passed from thence to the southern part of Europe, and in this romantic age gave rise in Sicily and Naples to a new kingdom, and a new line of princes.

All the kingdoms on the continent of Europe were governed nearly in the same form ; from whence arose a great similitude in the manners of their inhabitants. The feudal discipline extended itself everywhere, and influenced the conduct of the courts, and the manners of the people, with its own irregular martial spirit. Subjects, under the complicated laws of various and rigorous servitude, exercised all the prerogatives of sovereign power. They distributed justice, they made war and peace at pleasure. The sovereign, with great pretensions, had but little power ; he was only a greater lord among great lords, who profited of the differences of his peers ; therefore no steady plan could be well pursued, either in war or peace. This day a prince seemed irresistible at the head of his numerous vassals, because their duty obliged them to war, and they performed this duty with pleasure. The next day saw this formidable power vanish like a dream, because this fierce undisciplined people had no patience, and the time of the feudal service was contained within very narrow limits. It was therefore easy to find a number of persons at all times ready to follow any standard, but it was hard to complete a considerable design, which required a regular and continued movement. This enterprising disposition in the gentry was very

general, because they had little occupation or pleasure but in war ; and the greatest rewards did then attend personal valour and prowess. All that professed arms became in some sort on an equality. A knight was the peer of a king ; and men had been used to see the bravery of private persons opening a road to that dignity. The temerity of adventurers was much justified by the ill order of every state, which left it a prey to almost any who should attack it with sufficient vigour. Thus, little checked by any superior power, full of fire, impetuosity, and ignorance, they longed to signalize themselves wherever an honourable danger called them ; and wherever that invited, they did not weigh very deliberately the probability of success.

The knowledge of this general disposition in the minds of men will naturally remove a great deal of our wonder at seeing an attempt, founded on such slender appearances of right, and supported by a power so little proportioned to the undertaking as that of William, so warmly embraced and so generally followed, not only by his own subjects, but by all the neighbouring potentates. The counts of Anjou, Bretagne, Ponthieu, Boulogne, and Poictou, sovereign princes ; adventurers from every quarter of France, the Netherlands, and the remotest parts of Germany, laying aside their jealousies and enmities to one another, as well as to William, ran with an inconceivable ardour into this enterprise ; captivated with the splendour of the object, which obliterated all thoughts of the uncertainty of the event. William kept up this fervour by promises of large territories to all his allies and associates in the country to be reduced by their united efforts. But after all it became equally necessary to reconcile to his enterprise the three great powers, of whom we have



just spoken, whose disposition must have had the most influence on his affairs.

His feudal lord the king of France was bound by his most obvious interests to oppose the further aggrandizement of one already too potent for a vassal ; but the king of France was then a minor ; and Baldwin, Earl of Flanders, whose daughter William had married, was regent of the kingdom. This circumstance rendered the remonstrance of the French council against his design of no effect ; indeed the opposition of the council itself was faint ; the idea of having a king under vassalage to their Crown might have dazzled the more superficial courtiers ; whilst those who thought more deeply were unwilling to discourage an enterprise which they believed would probably end in the ruin of the undertaker. The emperor was in his minority, as well as the king of France ; but by what arts the duke prevailed upon the imperial council to declare in his favour, whether or no by an idea of creating a balance to the power of France, if we can imagine that any such idea then subsisted, is altogether uncertain ; but it is certain that he obtained leave for the vassals of the empire to engage in his service, and that he made use of this permission. The pope's consent was obtained with still less difficulty. William had shown himself in many instances a friend to the church, and a favourer of the clergy. On this occasion he promised to improve those happy beginnings in proportion to the means he should acquire by the favour of the holy see. It is said that he even proposed to hold his new kingdom as a fief from Rome. The pope, therefore, entered heartily into his interests ; he excommunicated all those that should oppose his enterprise, and sent him, as a means of insuring success, a consecrated banner.

## WHAT IS A POET ?

(WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, 1770-1850)

TAKING up the subject upon general grounds, I ask what is meant by the word Poet ? What is a Poet ? To whom does he address himself ? And what language is to be expected from him ? He is a man speaking to men : a man, it is true, endued with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind ; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him ; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings on of the universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them. To these qualities he has added a disposition to be affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present ; an ability of conjuring up in himself passions, which are indeed far from being the same as those produced by real events, yet (especially in those parts of the general sympathy which are pleasing and delightful) do more nearly resemble the passions produced by real events, than anything which, from the motions of their own minds merely, other men are accustomed to feel in themselves ; whence, and from practice, he has acquired a greater readiness and power in expressing what he thinks and feels, and especially those thoughts and feelings which, by his own choice, or from the structure of his own mind, arise in him without immediate external excitement.

But, whatever portion of this faculty we may suppose even the greatest poet to possess, there cannot be a doubt but that the language which it will suggest to him must, in liveliness and truth, fall far short of that which is uttered by men in real life, under the actual pressure of those passions, certain shadows of which the poet thus produces, or feels to be produced, in himself.

However exalted a notion we would wish to cherish of the character of a poet, it is obvious that, while he describes and imitates passions, his situation is altogether slavish and mechanical, compared with the freedom and power of real and substantial action and suffering. So that it will be the wish of the poet to bring his feelings near to those of the persons whose feelings he describes, nay, for short spaces of time, perhaps, to let himself slip into an entire delusion, and even confound and identify his own feelings with theirs ; modifying only the language which is thus suggested to him by a consideration that he describes for a particular purpose, that of giving pleasure. Here, then, he will apply the principle on which I have so much insisted, namely, that of selection ; on this he will depend for removing what would otherwise be painful or disgusting in the passion ; he will feel that there is no necessity to trick out or elevate nature ; and, the more industriously he applies this principle, the deeper will be his faith that no words, which *his* fancy or imagination can suggest, will bear to be compared with those which are the emanations of reality and truth.

But it may be said by those who do not object to the general spirit of these remarks, that, as it is impossible for the poet to produce upon all occasions language as exquisitely fitted for the passion as that which the real passion itself suggests, it is proper that he should consider

himself as in the situation of a translator, who deems himself justified when he substitutes excellences of another kind for those which are unattainable by him ; and endeavours occasionally to surpass his original, in order to make some amends for the general inferiority to which he feels that he must submit. But this would be to encourage idleness and unmanly despair. Further, it is the language of men, who speak of what they do not understand ; who talk of poetry as of a matter of amusement and idle pleasure ; who will converse with us as gravely about a taste for poetry, as they express it, as if it were a thing as indifferent as a taste for rope-dancing, or Frontignac, or Sherry. (Aristotle, I have been told, hath said, that poetry is the most philosophic of all writing : it is so : its object is truth, not individual and local, but general and operative ; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion ; truth which is its own testimony, which gives strength and divinity to the tribunal to which it appeals, and receives them from the same tribunal. / Poetry is the image of man and nature. + The obstacles which stand in the way of the fidelity of the biographer and historian, and of their consequent utility, are incalculably greater than those which are to be encountered by the poet who has an adequate notion of the dignity of his art. The poet writes under one restriction only, namely, that of the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to a human being possessed of that information which may be expected from him, not as a lawyer, a physician, a mariner, an astronomer, or a natural philosopher, but as a man. Except this one restriction, there is no object standing between the poet and the image of things ; between this and the biographer and the historian there are a thousand.

Nor let this necessity of producing immediate pleasure be considered as a degradation of the poet's art. It is far otherwise. It is an acknowledgement of the beauty of the universe, an acknowledgement the more sincere because it is not formal, but indirect ; it is a task light and easy to him who looks at the world in the spirit of love ; further, it is a homage paid to the native and naked dignity of man, to the grand elementary principle of pleasure, by which he knows, and feels, and lives, and ~~loves~~. We have no sympathy but what is propagated by pleasure. I would not be misunderstood, but wherever we sympathize with pain, it will be found that the sympathy is produced and carried on by subtle combinations with pleasure. We have no knowledge, that is, no general principles drawn from the contemplation of particular facts, but what has been built up by pleasure, and exists in us by pleasure alone. The man of science, the chemist, and mathematician, whatever difficulties and disgusts they may have had to struggle with, know and feel this. However painful may be the objects with which the anatomist's knowledge is connected, he feels that his knowledge is pleasure ; and where he has no pleasure, he has no knowledge. What then does the poet ? He considers man and the objects that surround him as acting and reacting upon each other, so as to produce an infinite complexity of pain and pleasure ; he considers man in his own nature and in his ordinary life as contemplating this with a certain quantity of immediate knowledge, with certain convictions, intuitions, and deductions, which by habit become of the nature of intuitions ; he considers him as looking upon this complex scene of ideas and sensations, and finding everywhere objects that immediately excite in him sympathies which, from the necessities of

his nature, are accompanied by an overbalance of enjoyment.

To this knowledge which all men carry about with them, and to these sympathies in which, without any other discipline than that of our daily life, we are fitted to take delight, the poet principally directs his attention. He considers man and nature as essentially adapted to each other, and the mind of man as naturally the mirror of the fairest and most interesting qualities of nature. And thus the poet, prompted by this feeling of pleasure which accompanies him through the whole course of his studies, converses with general nature with affections akin to those which, through labour and length of time, the man of science has raised up in himself, by conversing with those parts of nature which are the objects of his studies. The knowledge both of the poet and the man of science is pleasure ; but the knowledge of the one cleaves to us as a necessary part of our existence, our natural and unalienable inheritance ; the other is a personal and individual acquisition, slow to come to us, and by no habitual and direct sympathy connecting us with our fellow beings. The man of science seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor ; he cherishes and loves it in his solitude ; the poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion. Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge ; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science. Emphatically may be said of the poet, as Shakespeare hath said of man, ' that he looks before and after ' . He is the rock of defence of human nature, an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love. In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners,

of laws and customs, in spite of things silently gone out of mind, and things violently destroyed, the poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time. The objects of the poet's thoughts are everywhere; though the eyes and senses of man are, it is true, his favourite guides, yet he will follow wheresoever he can find an atmosphere of sensation in which to move his wings. Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge — it is as immortal as the heart of man. If the labours of men of science should ever create any material revolution, direct or indirect, in our condition, and in the impressions which we habitually receive, the poet will sleep then no more than at present, but he will be ready to follow the steps of the man of science, not only in those general indirect effects, but he will be at his side, carrying sensation into the midst of objects of the science itself. The remotest discoveries of the chemist, the botanist, or mineralogist, will be as proper objects of the poet's art as any upon which it can be employed, if the time should ever come when these things shall be familiar to us, and the relations under which they are contemplated by the followers of these respective sciences shall be manifestly and palpably material to us as enjoying and suffering beings. If the time should ever come when what is now called science, thus familiarized to men, shall be ready to put on, as it were, a form of flesh and blood, the poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration, and will welcome the being thus produced as a dear and a genuine inmate of the household of man. It is not, then, to be supposed that any one, who holds that sublime notion of poetry which I have attempted to convey, will break in upon the sanctity and truth of his pictures by transitory and acci-



dental ornaments, and endeavour to excite admiration of himself by arts, the necessity of which must manifestly depend upon the assumed meanness of his subject.

## 9

## A CLASSIFICATION OF POETS .

(F. W. ROBERTSON, 1816-53)

CONSIDER, next, the influence of the spirit of Poetry as distinguished from the particular form in which it may be manifested.

The poets of the higher order are susceptible of a still further subdivision. There are those who project themselves out of their own particular being, and become by imagination one with that on which they meditate: and those who inform all they gaze on with their own individuality. Those, that is, who sympathize with all that is created: and those whose imagination makes all to sympathize with them. I need not say which of these two classes is the domain of the higher Poetry. Wherever egotism enters, whether it be into life or into art, it degrades and narrows; he through whom the universe speaks what God intended it to speak, is, as a poet, greater than he who through all the universe still only speaks out himself.

Now remark the different influence of these classes.

First, we have those whose imagination represents all nature as sympathizing with them; and just as through a coloured glass a landscape looks red, blue, or yellow, as the glass may be tinted, so does one feeling modify all others, and colour all things with its own hue. In some measure this is true of us all.



I may not hope from outward forms to win  
The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.  
O Lady ! we receive but what we give,  
And in our life alone does nature live :  
Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud !<sup>1</sup>

We all possess this tendency when the imagination has been intensified by one single passion, or narrowed by one absorbing pursuit. Let me give you a very homely illustration. I was once passing through the finest street ~~in~~ England on the outside of a mail coach. A young woman who sat near me, when we had reached the end of the street, suddenly exclaimed, ' I never saw so many narrow doors in all my life ! ' When the first surprise, produced by an exclamation so much in discord with my own thoughts, had subsided, I began to make inquiries, and discovered that her father was a builder. The builder's daughter had cast the hue of her daily associations over everything. To her the buildings grey with the hoar of ages were as if they were not : historical interest, architectural beauty, solemn associations did not exist. To her there was nothing there but stones, graven by the stonemason's chisel, and doors, measurable by the rule of the carpenter. And in the same way do we all colour nature with our own pursuits. To a sportsman, a rich field is covert for game : to a farmer, the result of guano : to a geologist, indication of a certain character of subjacent rock.

It is very instructive to observe how superstition can thus summon all nature to be the minister of our human history, especially when it is rendered more imperious in its demands by pride. There is scarcely an ancient family which has not the tradition of preternatural appearances

<sup>1</sup> Coleridge—Ode to Dejection.

preceding the death, or connected with the destinies of the chief members of the race. Shakespeare, as usual, gives us this. Lear's anguish sheds the hue of ingratitude over the heavens. To Timon, sun, and moon, and stars are tinctured with his misanthropy. To Macbeth, meditating murder, all nature is preternatural, sounds of simple instinct ominous, and all things conscious of his secret.

... Now o'er the one-half world  
Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse  
The curtain'd sleep ; witchcraft celebrates  
Pale Hecate's offerings ; and withered murther,  
Alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf,  
Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace,  
With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design  
Moves like a ghost. Thou sure and firm-set earth,  
Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear  
Thy very stones prate of my whereabouts,  
And take the present horror from the time,  
Which now suits with it.

... Come, seeling<sup>1</sup> night,  
Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day ;  
And, with thy bloody and invisible hand,  
Cancel, and tear to pieces, that great bond  
Which keeps me pale ! Light thickens ; and the crow  
Makes wing to the rooky wood ;  
Good things of day begin to droop and drowse ;  
While night's black agents to their prey do rouse.

Observe, again, how Casca's conscience, already half burdened, distorts the simplest phenomena :

Against the capitol I met a lion,  
Who glared upon me, and went surly by  
Without annoying me ; and there were drawn  
Upon a heap a hundred ghastly women

<sup>1</sup> Blinding.

Transformed with their fear : who swore they saw  
Men all in fire walk up and down the streets.  
And yesterday, the bird of night did sit,  
Even at noonday, upon the market place  
Hooting and shrieking.

Of all this apparent supernaturalism, Cicero gives the true account, in reply :

Indeed, it is a strange disposed time ;  
But men may construe things after their fashion,  
Clean from the purpose of the things themselves.

And Calpurnia, with a presentiment of her husband's doom :

There is one within,  
Besides the things that we have heard and seen,  
Recounts most horrid sights seen by the watch.  
A lioness hath whelped in the streets :  
And graves have yawned and yielded up their dead :  
Fierce, fiery warriors fight upon the clouds,  
In ranks and squadrons and right form of war,  
Which drizzled blood upon the capitol :  
The noise of battle hurtled in the air,  
Horses do neigh, and dying men did groan :  
And ghosts did shriek and squeal about the streets.

Mark, too, how, as I said, pride has its share in giving shape to this superstition. Caesar replies, the valour of the conqueror defying omens, and the large heart of the man recognizing his subjection to the laws of a common humanity :

Yet Caesar shall go forth : for these predictions  
Are to the world in general, as to Caesar.

But Calpurnia, with that worship of high birth which is peculiar to the feminine nature, answers :

When beggars die, there are no comets seen :  
The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes.

So wonderful is that egoism of man which can thus overspread the heavens with its woes, and read in the planets only prophecies of himself ! Now that which belongs to us all in some moods is characteristic of some poets through all their nature, and pervades their work. The influence, therefore, of this class of Poetry depends upon the *man*. The self which is thrown upon nature may be the lower or the higher self, and the influence will be correspondingly of the lower or the higher kind.

Among the former divisions of the egoistic class of first-rate poets, severe justice compels me with pain to place Lord Byron. Brought up under the baleful influences of Calvinism, which makes sovereign Will the measure of Right, instead of Right the cause and law of Will, a system which he all his life hated and believed—fancying himself the mark of an inexorable decree, and bidding a terrible defiance to the unjust One who had fixed his doom—no wonder that, as in that strange phenomenon, the spectre of the Brocken, the traveller sees a gigantic form cast upon the mists, which he discovers at last to be but his own shadow, so, the noble poet went through life haunted, turn which way he would, with the gigantic shadow of himself, which obscured the heavens and turned the light into thick darkness.

Foremost among those in whom a higher self informs all objects stands Milton. We are compelled to place him with those in whom egoism is not wholly absorbed in nature. Shakespeare is a 'voice'. Read Shakespeare through, and, except from some of his sonnets, you could not guess who or what manner of man he was. But you could not read Milton long without discovering the man through the poet. His domestic miseries are reflected in his *Samson Agonistes*. In his *Comus*, that majestic psalm

to Chastity, are blended the antique heroism of his Pagan studies, and the Christian sanctities of his rare manhood. His very angels reason upon Puritan questions ; and it was the taunt of Pope, that in the Eternal lips themselves, redemption is a contrivance or scheme according to the systematic theology of a school divine. And yet the egoism with which all his Poetry is impregnated is the egoism of a glorious nature. If we were asked who in the eighteen Christian centuries stands before us as the highest approximation to what we conceive as Christian manhood, in which are rarely blended the opposites of purity and passion, gracefulness and strength, sanctity and manifold fitness for all the worldly duties of the man and the citizen, we should scarcely hesitate to answer—John Milton. The poet is overshadowed by the individual man : but the influence of the man is all for good.

Now compare with these the poets who see in Nature not themselves, but Nature ; who are her voice, not she theirs. Of this class, likewise, there are two divisions : the first represented by Shakespeare, the second by Wordsworth.

Shakespeare is a universal poet, because he utters all that is in men ; Wordsworth, because he speaks that which is in all men. There is much difference between these two statements.

The perfection of Shakespeare, like all the highest perfection, consists, not in the predominance of a single quality, or feeling, but in the just balance and perfect harmony of all. You cannot say whether the tragic element of our nature, or the comic, predominates ; whether he has more sympathy with its broad laugh, or its secret sigh ; with the contemplativeness of Hamlet, which lets the moment of action pass, or the promptitude

of Hotspur; with the aristocratic pride of Coriolanus, which cannot deign to canvass the mob for votes, or the coarse wit and human instincts of the serving men.

Wordsworth, on the contrary, gives to us humanity stripped of its peculiarities, the feelings which do not belong to this man or that, this or that age, but are the heritage of our common nature. 'That', says he in a private letter, 'which will distinguish my poems hereafter from those of other poets is this: that while other poets laboured to exhibit that which distinguishes one man from another, especially the dramatic poets, I have made it my concern to exhibit that which is common to all men.'

As a specimen of this, take that well-known poem :

She was a phantom of delight,  
When first she gleamed upon my sight;  
A lovely apparition, sent  
To be a moment's ornament;  
Her eyes as stars of twilight fair;  
Like twilight's, too, her dusky hair;  
But all things else about her drawn  
From May-time's brightest, loveliest dawn;  
A dancing shape, an image gay,  
To haunt, to startle, and way-lay.

I saw her upon nearer view,  
A spirit, yet a woman too!  
Her household motions light and free,  
And steps of virgin liberty;  
A countenance in which did meet  
Sweet records, promises as sweet;  
A creature not too bright or good  
For human nature's daily food;  
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,  
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles.

And now I see with eye serene  
The very pulse of the machine;

A being breathing thoughtful breath,  
A traveller between life and death;  
The reason firm, the temperate will,  
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill;  
A perfect woman, nobly planned,  
To warn, to comfort, and command;  
And yet a spirit still, and bright,  
With something of an angel light.

You will observe that it is not a portrait like one of Shakespeare's, in which, gradually, a particular female character unfolds a personality which belongs to Miranda or to Juliet, and could not belong to Cleopatra or to Lady Macbeth: nor a description like Tennyson's, which, if true of Isabel or Lilian, must be false of Adeline or Eleanore: nor, again, this or that woman, coloured in the false hues which passion or fancy have thrown on her for a time: but womanhood in its essence, and divested of its peculiarities of nation or century: such as her Creator meant her to be: such as every woman is potentially if not actually: such as she appears successively to the lover, the husband, and the friend, separating from such lover, husband, and friend, the accidents of an English, Spanish, or French temperament. And yet, remark that this womanhood, so painted, is not a mere thin, unsubstantial abstraction of the intellect; but a living, tangible image, appreciable by the senses, a single, total impression, 'sensuous' as Milton says of Poetry: else it would not be Poetry, but a scientific definition. You have before you an ideal clothed in flesh and blood, without the limitations of any particular idiosyncrasy.

This is the sense in which poets like Wordsworth are universal poets and free from egoism; very different from the sense in which Shakespeare is universal.

Now to compare the various influences of these poets.

And, first, to compare class with class. The poet in whom individuality predominates will have a more definite influence : he of whom universality is the characteristic, a more wide and lasting one. The influence of Cowper, Milton, or Byron, on individuals is distinct and appreciable : that of Homer and Shakespeare, almost imperceptible on single minds, is spread silently over ages, and determines the character of the world's literature and the world's feeling.

Comparing each class with itself, and taking first that which we have characterized as the more egoistic, the more popular will be almost always the less pure, because the passionate enthusiasm for what is great and good is shared by few, comparatively with the power of comprehending the might and force of what we commonly call the passions. Milton is placed with honour on our shelves. We read Byron through and through.

Next, of the poets of nature, Shakespeare, and the very few who can be ranked with him, will be more popular than such as Wordsworth ; not because he is greater, though he is, of course, immeasurably, but because his greatness, like that of nature's self, is broken into fragments, and all can find in him something corresponding with their humour. Only a few, like Herschel and Humboldt, can comprehend with something like adequateness, the Cosmos, or Order of the Universe ; there is no one who cannot read a page of it. And so, very few of those who talk of Shakespeare's greatness know *how* great he is ; but all can mark with pencil dashes certain lines and detached acts ; and if you examined the copy so dashed and marked, you would probably discover what in Shakespeare bears, or was supposed to bear, reference to the reader's own character, or more properly, illustrated



his or her private prejudices, peculiarities, and personal history ; but, unless a hand as free from egoism as Shakespeare's own had drawn the lines of approval, you would gain from a book of extracts made up of all such passages, not the nature of Man, but the idiosyncrasy of a man. Tell us, therefore, that a man's favourite poet is such as Wordsworth, and we know something about his character ; but tell us that he delights in Shakespeare, and we know as yet no more of him than if it had been said that life has joys for him. He may be a Marlborough, or he may be a clown.

Permit me to offer you two pieces of advice, resulting from what has been said.

First, cultivate universality of taste. There is no surer mark of a half-educated mind than the incapacity of admiring various forms of excellence. Men who cannot praise Dryden without disparaging Coleridge, nor feel the stern, earthly truthfulness of Crabbe without disparaging the wild, ethereal, impalpable music of Shelley ; nor exalt Spenser except by sneering at Tennyson, are precisely the persons to whom it should in consistency seem strange that in God's world there is a place for the eagle and the wren, a separate grace to the swan and the humming-bird, their own fragrance to the cedar and the violet. Enlarge your tastes, that you may enlarge your hearts as well as your pleasures : feel all that is beautiful—love all that is good. The first maxim in religion and in art is—sever yourself from all sectarianism ; pledge yourself to no school ; cut your life adrift from all party ; be a slave to no maxims ; stand forth, unfettered and free, servant only to the truth. And if you say, ' But this will force each of us to stand alone : ' I reply—Yes, grandly alone ! untrammelled by the prejudices of any, and

free to admire the beauty and love the goodness of them all.

Secondly, of the writers whom we called egoistic, in whom, that is, the man predominates over the poet, choose such only as are the unfeigned servants of goodness—I do not mean *goodliness*—to be your special favourites. In early life it is, I believe, from this class solely that our favourites are selected: and a man's character and mind are moulded for good or evil far more by the forms of imagination which surround his childhood than by any subsequent scientific training. We can recollect how a couplet from the frontispiece of a hymn-book struck deeper roots into our being, and has borne more manifest fruits, than all the formal training we ever got. Or we can trace, as unerringly as an Indian on the trail, the several influences of each poet through our lives: the sense of unjust destiny which was created by Byron: the taint of Moore's voluptuousness: the hearty, healthful life of Scott: the calming power of Wordsworth: the masculine vigour of Dryden. For it is only in after years that the real taste for the very highest Poetry is acquired. Life, and experience, as well as mental cultivation, are indispensable. In earlier life the influence of the man is mightier than that of the poet. Therefore, let every young man especially guard his heart and imagination against the mastery of those writers who sap his vigour and taint his purity.

## THE POPULAR POET

(AUGUSTUS WILLIAM HARE, 1792-1834)

A POET, to be popular, ought not to be too purely and intensely poetical. He should have plenty of ordinary poetry for the multitude of ordinary readers : and perhaps it may be well that he should have some poetry better than ordinary, lest the multitude should be daunted by finding themselves entirely at variance with the intelligent few. This, however, is by no means clear. He who calls to mind the popularity of *The Pleasures of Hope*, may remark that the artificial flowers in a milliner's window do not want any natural ones to set them off ; and that a star looks very pale and dull when squibs and rockets are shining it out of countenance. In truth this has just been the case with *Gertrude of Wyoming*, which has been quite thrown into the shade by its gaudier, flimsier neighbour.

I have known several persons, to whom no poem of Wordsworth's gave so much pleasure as the *Lines written while sailing in a boat at evening* ; which were composed, as he has told me, on the Cam, while he was at College. *O, if he had but gone on writing in that style*, many will say, *what a charming poet he would have been !* For these are among the very few verses of Wordsworth's, which any other person might have written : that is, bating the purity and delicacy of the language, and the sweetness of the versification. The sentiment and the exercise of fancy are just raised so much above the temperature of common life, as to produce a pleasant glow : and there is nothing calling for any stretch of imagination or of thought ;

nothing like what we so often find in his poems, when out of Nature's heart a voice 'appears to issue, *startling the blank air*'.

In like manner I have been told that, among Landor's *Conversations*, the most general favourite is that between General Kleber and some French officers. If it be so, one may easily see why. Beautiful as some touches in it are, it is not so far removed as most of its companions from what other men have written and can write.

No doubt there is also another reason,—that this Conversation has something of a story connected with it. For in mere incidents all take an interest, through the universal fellow feeling which binds man to man; as is proved by the fondness for gossiping, from which so few are exempt. Above all is such an interest excited by everything connected, however remotely, with the two great powers which come across the path of life,—death, which terminates it,—and love, which, to the imagination even of the least imaginative, seems to carry it for a while out of the highway dust, into the midst of green fields and flowers. Hence it is that all tattlers delight in getting hold of anything akin to a love-story; not merely from a fondness for scandal, but because the most powerful and pleasurable of human feelings is in some measure awakened and excited thereby.

Nor is it at all requisite to the excitement of interest by incidents, that the persons they befall should have any depth of character or passion. On the contrary, such a surplusage often makes them less generally interesting. Leave out the thoughts and the characters in *Hamlet*, *Lear*, and *Macbeth*: as pantomimic melodramas they might perchance run against *Pizarro* and *The Forest of Bondy*. Hence the popularity of novels; the name of

which implies some novel incident ; and the interest of which mostly arises from the entangling and disentangling of a love-story. Indeed this is all that the bulk of novel-readers care about ; who loves whom ? and by what difficulties their loves are crossed ? and how those difficulties are surmounted ? and how the love-knot, after the tying and untying of sundry other knots, twists about at length into a marriage-knot ?

This, too, is perhaps one of the reasons why the heroes and heroines of novels have so little character. They are to be just such persons as the readers can wish and believe themselves to be, tricked out with all manner of insipid virtues, unencumbered by anything distinctive and individual. Then we may float along in a day-dream, with a half-conscious persuasion that all the occurrences related are happening to ourselves. Hereby Poetry, instead of lifting us out of ourselves into an ideal world, brings down its world to us, and peoples the real world with phantoms. These delusions would be dispersed by any powerful delineation of individual character. We cannot fancy ourselves Lear, or Macbeth, or Hamlet ; although on deeper reflection we perceive that we are heirs of a common nature.

✓ In this sense it is very true, that, as one of our greatest modern writers once said, incident and interest are the bane of poetry. For the main subject-matter of poetry being man—the various modifications and combinations of human character and feelings—, the facts it treats of will be primarily actions, or what men do, exhibiting and fulfilling the inward impulses of their nature ; and secondarily events, which follow one another according to an apparent law, and which show how the outward world runs parallel or counter to the characters, calling forth their

dormant energies, unfolding them, shaping them, perfecting them. Whereas incidents are mere creatures of chance, unconnected, insulated, and interesting solely from themselves, from their strangeness, not from their moral influence. Such an interest being excited with far more ease, both by the writer and in the reader, the love of incidents has commonly been among the symptoms of a declining age in poetry ; as for instance in Euripides, compared with Aeschylus and Sophocles, in Fletcher compared with Shakespeare.

And this is the interest which is injurious to poetry, the interest excited by strange incidents, and by keeping curiosity on the stretch. Not that good poetry is to be uninteresting : but the sources of its interest lie deeper in our inmost consciousness and primary sympathies. Hence it is permanent. While the interest awakened by curiosity fades away when the curiosity has once been gratified, true poetical interest, the interest excited by the throes and conflicts of human passion, is wont to increase as we become familiar with its object. Every time I read *King Oedipus*, the interest seems to become more intense : the knowledge of the result does not prevent my sympathizing anew with the terrific struggle. So it is in *Othello*. Whereas that excited by *The Castle of Otranto*, or *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, is nearly extinct after the first reading. In truth a mystery is unworthy of the name, unless it becomes more mysterious when we have been initiated into it, than it was before.

## THE PRESENT STATE OF POETRY

(FROM *The Athenaeum*).

THE various schools of poetry at present in England have a common characteristic—conservatism. Each goes back to some tradition, and does very little more than carry it on. The writers who now pretend most to originality are generally the most imitative : snatching at the eccentricities of great but uneven models, they try, by exaggerating these, to produce the effect of novelty. The work of the best writers of verse of the younger generation consists chiefly of pleasant but slight variations on known themes. There is scarcely any development.

In regard to the means of poetic expression, this conservatism is worthy of admiration. It is now no easy task, even for a man of genius, to keep unimpaired the magnificent instrument of English poetry. Far too many writers of the last generation went out of their way to break up our language in their search after novelty of diction. Its resources, as Newman long since pointed out, are developed to that point at which decay sets in. A loving knowledge of the treasures of our tongue, and a true instinct in selecting from them, are now of much higher value than the verbal inventiveness of impatient and rather ignorant minds. The latter abound, at home and abroad. To the glory of our race but the confusion of our speech, we have planted overseas many a *Soli* where solecisms are being proudly and vigorously cultivated as elements of new national dialects. Their disastrous influence on our literature daily grows wider and more profound : it tells on our press in a manner patent to

every observer ; it affects our speech even more deeply ; and on English prose generally it works with a subtle, disintegrating effect. But few of the best of our novelists of the younger generation are able to write a sound prose in which the great traditions of English style are respected. They obtain, doubtless, a certain freshness of diction by submitting to the new influences ; but this freshness is at times not unlike mere crudity, and at best it is of little value when compared with all that is lost in gaining it.

Only in our poetry are the treasures of our language loyally conserved, and our poets are well rewarded for their loving care. They possess a poetic diction which has been enriched and clarified, hardened and tempered, until it has become almost as perfect an instrument of expression as a thing of man's making can be. The melody of its rhythms seems inexhaustible ; there is a wonderful variety in the orchestral harmonies of its periods ; and its strange, magical power of using the commonest words, and heightening and glorifying them, enables it to fulfil most of the purposes of prose diction without ceasing to be finely poetic. Were Milton now living, he could make his *Samson Agonistes* what he dreamed of making it—a work in which poetry absorbed the special qualities of prose, and acquired, besides the resulting flexibility, a larger movement and a more subtle music. As it is, we have an incomparable orchestra, but no man who seems capable of writing for it. The task of keeping one of the various instruments in order appears to exhaust the energy of our various poets ; and they practise their solos far more often than they perform them. Take for instance the case of Mr. W. B. Yeats—the most poetic of our younger poets, in the opinion of several good critics. After studying the magic flute under William Morris,



Rossetti, and Blake, he found a new fairyland in Irish myth and legend. But he is unable to play us there as Morris played us into the enchanted lands which he discovered. Only in the prose of Lady Gregory are seen some clear outlines of that world of fairies and heroes which the poets of the Irish school dream of, but cannot enter. They lead us to magic casements opening on nothing.

What is wanting in them, and in every writer of English verse at the present time, with the exception of the author of *The Dynasts*, is energy of imagination. This, it may be argued, is a failing now common to men in every noble field of activity. The present writer does not think so. He, too, belongs to the younger generation, and, like many of his fellows, he accounts himself happy in that he is coming to the prime of life in one of the most exciting and hopeful eras in the history of the world. It seems to him—is it an illusion of fading youth?—that we are passing out of the wild, dazzling glare of the great *Aufklärung* of the latter part of the nineteenth century into the large, steady light of a period of constructive activity in religion, science, philosophy, art, and letters. It is still too early to expect any general settlement of views in regard to the objects of fundamental importance; but these objects are becoming clearly defined. Clearness of vision is in itself a source of inspiration; and from it the best writers of the age derive their energy.

It is a fact of importance that these men are all prose writers. We have at least seven authors of recognized genius, and prose is their medium of expression. It is true that Mr. Thomas Hardy, the oldest and greatest of them, is the author of the most original essay in poetic drama since *Faust*; but is he not essentially a prose writer who composes verse, as Milton would say, with his

left hand? It is in his marvellous stage-directions that his extraordinary breadth and intensity of vision are displayed; his poetry is merely a comment on his prose. Nevertheless, it is fortunate for English literature that he has turned from prose, and is using the instrument of verse. Even as a poet, his virtues are greater than his defects. He imports from our prose into our poetry the qualities which our poetry now lacks—the sincerity, strength, range, and clarity of an enriched and disciplined imagination. With the exception of Francis Thompson and John Davidson, our poets of the younger generation seem to have lived entirely in the Palace of Art. Their impressions of life are taken at second-hand, and their ideas, derived from these impressions, are fanciful rather than imaginative. Our novelists, on the other hand, have been trained to use their own eyes. The general effect on our fiction of the realistic movement has been beneficent. It has hurt some weak minds; it has alarmed many tender consciences; it has enabled a few bad writers to acquire an unenviable reputation; but it has aroused in a considerable number of men a deeper sense of the realities of life, and this has in turn quickened their feelings, given their intellect a finer edge, and disciplined their imagination. The ordeal was severe: it was the grim, sombre aspect of existence which the realists set themselves to depict. But after exploring the gloomy side of things, they began, in a natural revulsion of feeling, to grope towards the light, and the realistic movement was gradually transformed into a movement of reasoned idealism. This reasoned idealism is different in origin and spirit from the current of idealistic emotion which, a century ago, roused the English mind from torpor, and found its fullest expression in the work of Shelley. It is grounded

on the positive results of the great critical effort of the latter part of the nineteenth century, and, even where it aims at giving a spiritual interpretation of life, it respects sound relations between ideas and facts.

Science has, as Wordsworth dimly foresaw<sup>1</sup>, created a great revolution in the impressions we receive from life and nature. Its discoveries are becoming familiar to us, and producing a profound effect on our minds. But our poets have not sufficient strength of soul and power of imagination to help in building the new material into the ancient fabric of human thought. In their hands poetry has ceased to be 'the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge'. It is merely an anodyne for timid, sentimental, dispirited creatures.

But this aversion from the life and thought and passion of the age deadens the imaginative faculties. There is scarcely any surge of feeling in the verse of the present day. Now and then one finds some song in which the movement of life is felt—some poem written in a sincere mood, and touched with the passion with which it was conceived; but, generally, the men of the younger generation who have devoted themselves to poetic work produce only the rhetoric of culture. Culture becomes rhetorical when a large knowledge of literary effect is used with merely a slight experience of actual life. This is one of the first distempers of learning and one of the last. It appears at the beginning of the golden age in the literature of a nation, when its writers, having forged their instrument of expression, play with it for a while before using it; and it recurs in an aggravated form in the decline of a noble civilization, when skill in literary composition has become a common accomplishment, and the inventive powers of the race are failing.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 60.

But at the present moment the inventive powers of the English race do not seem to be exhausted. We have recently begun to produce plays marked by the same qualities as the finest of our novels. It is, indeed, probable that our fiction will be reduced by the conversion of some of our best novelists into brilliant playwrights ; for the theatre promises to become again a great moulding force in our literature. Perhaps some poet will also feel its vivifying influence. Only by means of the drama can poetry resume its close connexion with our national life, and thence recover its ancient power over the mind of the people.

12

CRITICISMS OF TENNYSON'S *IN MEMORIAM*

(F. W. ROBERTSON, 1816-53)

THE poem entitled *In Memoriam* is a monument erected by friendship to the memory of a gifted son of the historian Hallam. It is divided into a number of cabinet-like compartments, which, with fine and delicate shades of difference, exhibit the various phases through which the bereaved spirit passes from the first shock of despair, dull, hopeless misery and rebellion, up to the dawn of hope, acquiescent trust, and even calm happiness again. In the meanwhile many a question has been solved, which can only suggest itself when suffering forces the soul to front the realities of our mysterious existence ; such as : Is there indeed a life to come ? And if there is, will it be a conscious life ? Shall I know that I am myself ? Will there be mutual recognition ? continuance of attachments ? Shall friend meet friend, and brother brother, as friends and brothers ? Or, again : How comes it that

one so gifted was taken away so early, in the maturity of his powers, just at the moment when they seemed about to become available to mankind? What means all this, and is there not something wrong? Is the Law of Creation Love indeed?

By slow degrees, all these doubts, and worse, are answered; not as a philosopher would answer them nor as a theologian, or a metaphysician, but as it is the duty of a poet to reply, by intuitive faculty, in strains in which Imagination predominates over Thought and Memory. And one of the manifold beauties of this exquisite poem, which is another characteristic of true Poetry, is that, piercing through all the sophistries and over refinements of speculation, and the lifeless scepticism of science, it falls back upon the grand, primary, simple truths of our humanity; those first principles which underlie all creeds, which belong to our earliest childhood, and on which the wisest and best have rested through all ages: that all is right: that darkness shall be clear: that God and Time are the only interpreters: that Love is king: that the Immortal is in us: that—which is the key-note of the whole—

... all is well, though Faith and Form  
Be sundered in the night of fear.

This is an essential quality of the highest Poetry, whose characteristic is simplicity; not in the sense of being intelligible, like a novel, to every careless reader, without pain or effort: for the best Poetry demands study as severe as mathematics require; and to any one who thinks that it can be treated as a mere relaxation and amusement for an idle hour, this Lecture does not address itself: but simplicity, in the sense of dealing with truths which do not belong to a few fastidious and refined

intellects, but are the heritage of the many. The deepest truths are the simplest and the most common.

It is wonderful how generally the formalists have missed their way to the interpretation of this poem. It is sometimes declared with oracular decisiveness, that, if this be Poetry, all they have been accustomed to call Poetry must change its name. As if it were not a law that every original poet must be in a sense new: as if Aeschylus were not a poet because he did not write an epic like Homer: or as if the Romantic poets were not poets because they departed from every rule of classical Poetry. And as if, indeed, this very objection had not been brought against the Romantic school, and Shakespeare himself pronounced by French critics a 'buffoon': till Schlegel showed that all life makes to itself its own form, and that Shakespeare's form had its living laws. So spoke the *Edinburgh Review* of Byron; but it could not arrest his career. So spoke Byron himself of Wordsworth: but he would be a bold man, or a very flippant one, who would dare to say now that Wordsworth is not a great poet. And the day will come when the slow, sure judgement of Time shall give to Tennyson his undisputed place among the English poets as a true one, of rare merit and originality.

To a coarser class of minds *In Memoriam* appears too melancholy: one long monotone of grief. It is simply one of the most victorious songs that ever poet chanted: with the mysterious undertone, no doubt, of sadness which belongs to all human joy, in front of the mysteries of death and sorrow; but that belongs to *Paradise Regained* as well as to *Paradise Lost*: to every true note, indeed, of human triumph except a Bacchanalian drinking-song. And that it should predominate in a monumental record is not particularly unnatural. But

readers who never dream of mastering the plan of a work before they pretend to criticize details can scarcely be expected to perceive that the wail passes into a hymn of solemn and peaceful beauty before it closes.

Another objection, proceeding from the religious periodicals, is, that the subject being a religious one, is not treated religiously ; by which they mean theologically. It certainly is neither saturated with Evangelicalism nor Tractarianism ; nor does it abound in the routine phrases which, when missed, raise a suspicion of heterodoxy ; nor does it seize the happy opportunity afforded for a pious denunciation of the errors of Purgatory and Mariolatry. But the objection to its want of definite theology—an objection, by the way, brought frequently against Wordsworth by writers of the same school—is, in fact, in favour of the presumption of its poetic merit ; for it may be the office of the priest to teach upon authority—of the philosopher according to induction—but the province of the poet is neither to teach by induction nor by authority, but to appeal to those primal intuitions of our being which are eternally and necessarily true.

With one of these criticisms I mean to occupy your time at somewhat further length. Some months ago, *The Times* devoted three or four columns to the work of depreciating Tennyson. I will answer that critique now, as concisely as I can ; not because *The Times* can do any permanent harm to Tennyson's reputation, but because it may do a great deal of harm to the taste of its readers. *The Times* is in possession of extensive influence : it forms the political creed, and is arbiter of the opinions of the many who must be led. I hold it therefore no unworthy antagonist.

Now, in any pretension to criticize a poetic work of

internal unity, the first duty, plainly, is to comprehend the structure of it as a whole, and master the leading idea. It is to be regretted that this is precisely what English critics generally do not. Even with our own Shakespeare, admiration or blame is usually confined to the beauties and blemishes of detached passages. For the significance of each play, as a whole, we had to look, in the first instance, to such foreigners as Augustus Schlegel to teach us.

Let us inquire what conception the critic of *The Times* has formed of this beautiful poem.

'Let the acknowledgement be made at once that the writer dedicated his thoughts to a most difficult task. He has written 200 pages upon one person—in other words, he has painted 120 miniatures of the same individual.'

Mr. Tennyson has not painted 120 portraits of the same individual. He has written a poem in 120 divisions, illustrative of the manifold phases through which the soul passes from doubt through grief to faith. With so entire and radical a misconception of the scope of the poem, it is not wonderful if the whole examination of the details should be a failure.

The first general charge is one of irreverence. The special case selected is these verses which are called blasphemous—

But brooding on the dear one dead,  
And all he said of things divine,  
(And dear as sacramental wine  
To dying lips is all he said—)

One would have thought that the holy tenderness of this passage would have made this charge impossible. However, as notions of reverence and irreverence in



some minds are singularly vague, we will give the flippant objection rather more attention than it merits.

By a sacrament we understand a means of grace : an outward something through which pure and holy feelings are communicated to the soul. In the Church of Christ there are two sacraments—the material of one is the commonest of all elements, water ; the form of the other the commonest of all acts, a meal. Now there are two ways in which reverence may be manifested towards any thing or person : one, by exalting that thing or person by means of the depreciation of all others : another, by exalting all others through it. To some minds it appears an honouring of the sacraments to represent them as solitary things in their own kind, like nothing else, and all other things and acts profane in comparison of them. It is my own deep conviction that no greater dishonour can be done to them than by this conception, which degrades them to the rank of charms. The sacraments are honoured when they consecrate all the things and acts of life. The commonest of all materials was sanctified to us in order to vindicate the sacredness of all materialism, in protest against the false spiritualism which affects to despise the body, and the world whose impressions are made upon the senses ; and in order to declare that visible world God's, and the organ of His manifestation. The simplest of all acts is sacramental, in order to vindicate God's claim to all acts, and to proclaim our common life sacred, in protest against the conception which cleaves so obstinately to the mind, that religion is the performance of certain stated acts, not necessarily of moral import, on certain days and in certain places. If there be anything in this life sacred, any remembrance filled with sanctifying power, any voice

which symbolizes to us the voice of God, it is the recollection of the pure and holy ones that have been taken from us, and of their examples and sacred words—

... dear as sacramental wine  
To dying lips . . .

In those lines Tennyson has deeply, no doubt unconsciously, that is, without dogmatic intention, entered into the power of the sacraments to diffuse their meaning beyond themselves. There is no irreverence in them, no blasphemy; nothing but delicate Christian truth.

The next definite charge is more difficult to deal with before a mixed society, because the shades of the feeling in question blend into each other with exceedingly fine gradation. The language of the friend towards the departed friend is represented as unfitted for any but amatory tenderness. In this blame the critic is compelled to include Shakespeare; for we all know that his sonnets, dedicated either to the Earl of Southampton or the Earl of Pembroke, contain expressions which have left it a point of controversy whether they were addressed to a lady or a friend. Now in a matter which concerns the truthfulness of a human feeling, when the anonymous critic of *The Times* is on one side and Shakespeare on the other, there are some who might be presumptuous enough to suppose *a priori* that the modest critic is possibly not the one in the right. However, let us examine the matter. There are two kinds of friendship: one is the affection of the greater for the less, the other that of the less for the greater. The greater and the less may be differences of rank, or intellect, or character, or power. These are the two opposites of feeling which respectively characterize the masculine and the feminine natures, the familiar symbols of which relationship are the oak and

the ivy with its clinging tendrils. But though they are the masculine and feminine types, they are not confined to male and female. Most of us have gone through both these phases of friendship. Whoever remembers an attachment at school to a boy feebler than himself, will recollect the exulting pride of guardianship with which he shielded his friend from the oppression of some young tyrant of the play-ground. And whoever, at least in boyhood or youth, loved a man, to whose mental or moral qualities he looked up with young reverence, will recollect the devotion and the jealousies, and the almost passionate tenderness, and the costly gifts, and the desire of personal sacrifices, which characterize boyish friendship, and which certainly belong to the feminine, and not the masculine type of affection. Doubtless the language of *In Memoriam* is tender in the extreme, such as a sister might use to a brother deeply loved. But it is to be remembered that it expresses the affection of the spirit which rejoices to confess itself the feebler; and besides, that the man has passed into a spirit, and that time and distance have thrown a hallowing haze of tenderness over the lineaments of the friend of the past. It may be well also to recollect that there is a precedent for this woman-like tenderness, against whose authority one who condemns so severely the most distant approach to irreverence will scarcely venture to appeal. 'I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been to me. Thy love to me was wonderful, *passing the love of women.*'

Again, the praise and the grief of the poem are enormously 'exaggerated'; and as an instance of the manner in which the 'poet may underline the moralist', and delicately omit the defects without hyperbolical praise, Dr. Johnson's lines on Levett are cited with much

fervour of admiration. Good, excellent Dr. Johnson ! sincerely pious ; very bigoted and very superstitious, yet one, withal, who fought the battle of life bravely out, in the teeth of disease and poverty ; a great lexicographer ; of massive learning ; the author of innumerable prudential aphorisms, much quoted by persons who season their conversation with proverbs and old saws ; the inditer of several thousand ponderous verses ; a man worthy of all respect. But it is indeed a surprising apparition when the shade of Dr. Johnson descends upon the Nineteenth Century as the spirit of a poet, and we are asked to identify the rugged portrait which Boswell painted with a model of delicate forbearance.

After these general observations, the writer in *The Times* proceeds to criticize in detail ; he awards some praise, and much blame. You shall have a specimen of each. Let us test the value of his praise. He selects for approbation, among others, these lines :—

Or is it that the Past will win  
A glory from its being far ;  
And orb into the perfect star  
We saw not when we moved therein ?

The question has suggested itself as a misgiving to the poet's mind, whether his past affection was really as full of blessedness as memory paints it, or whether it be not the perspective of distance which conceals its imperfections, and throws purer hues upon it than it possessed while actual. In the rapid reading of the two last lines I may not have at once conveyed to you the meaning. So long as we remain upon any planet, this earth for instance, it would wear a commonplace, earthy look : but if we could ascend from it into space, in proportion to the distance, it would assume a heavenly

aspect, and orb or round itself into a star. This is a very simple and graceful illustration. Now hear the critic of *The Times* condescending to be an analyst of its beauties :

‘ There is something indeed striking and suggestive in comparing the gone-by time to some luminous body rising like a red harvest moon behind us, lighting our path homeward.’

So that this beautiful simile of Tennyson’s, of a distant star receding into pale and perfect loveliness, in the hands of *The Times* becomes a *great red harvest moon* !

So much for the praise. Now for the blame. The following passage is selected :—

Oh, if indeed that eye foresee,  
Or see (in Him is no before)  
In more of life true love no more,  
And love the indifference to be,

So might I find, ere yet the morn  
Breaks hither over Indian seas,  
That Shadow waiting with the keys,  
To cloak me from my proper scorn.

That is, as you will see at once, after the thought of the transitoriness of human affection has occurred to him, the possibility is also suggested with it, that he himself may change ; but he prays that before that day can come, he may find the Shadow waiting with the keys to cloak him from his own scorn. Now I will read the commentary :—

‘ Lately we have heard much of keys, both from the Flaminian Gate and Piccadilly, but we back this verse against Hobbs. We dare him to pick it. Mr. Moxon may hang it up in his window, with a £200 prize attached, more safely than a Bramah. That a shadow should hold keys at all is a noticeable circumstance ; but that it

should wait with a cloak, ready to be thrown over a gentleman in difficulties, is absolutely amazing.'

The lock may be picked without any exertion of unfair force.

A few pages before he has spoken of the breaking up of a happy friendship—

There sat the Shadow, feared by man,  
Who broke our fair companionship.

Afterwards he calls it—

The Shadow, cloaked from head to foot,  
Who keeps the key of all the creeds.

Take, at a venture, any charity-school boy, of ordinary intelligence; read to him these lines; and he will tell you that the Shadow feared by man is death; that it is cloaked from head to foot because death is mysterious, and its form not distinguishable; and that he keeps the keys of all the creeds, because he alone can unlock the secret of the grave, and show which of all conflicting human creeds is true.

'It is a noticeable thing', we are told, 'that a shadow should hold keys at all.' It is a very noticeable thing that a skeleton should hold a scythe and an hour-glass: very noticeable that a young lady should hold scales when she is blindfold; yet it is not a particularly uncommon rule of symbolism so to represent Time and Justice. Probably the writer in *The Times*, if he should chance to read of 'riding on the wings of the wind', would consider it a very noticeable method of locomotion; perhaps would inquire, with dull facetiousness, what was the precise length of the primary, secondary, and tertiary quills of the said wings; and if told of a spirit clothing itself in light, he might triumphantly demand in what loom light could be woven into a great-coat.

Finally. The critique complains that a vast deal of poetic feeling has been wasted on a lawyer ; and much wit is spent upon the tenderness which is given to ' Amaryllis of the Chancery bar '. A barrister, it seems, is beyond the pale of excusable, because poetical, sensibilities. So that, if my friend be a soldier, I may love him, and celebrate him in poetry, because the profession of arms is by all conventional associations heroic : or if he bears on his escutcheon the red hand of knighthood, or wears a ducal coronet, or even be a shepherd, still there are poetic precedents for romance ; but if he be a member of the Chancery bar, or only a cotton lord, then, because these are not yet grades accredited as heroic in song, worth is not worth, and honour is not honour, and nobleness is not nobility. O, if we wanted poets for nothing else, it would be for this, that they are the grand levellers, vindicating the sacredness of our common humanity, and in protest against such downright vulgarity of heart as this, reminding us that—

For a' that, and a' that,  
A man's a man for a' that.

So much then for the critic of *The Times* : wrong when he praises and wrong when he blames : who finds Shakespeare false to the facts of human nature, and quotes Dr. Johnson as a model poet : who cannot believe in the Poetry of any expression unless it bear the mint-stamp of a precedent, and cannot understand either the exaggerations or the infinitude of genuine grief.

Let it serve to the members of this Institution as a comment on the opinion quoted at the outset that it is sufficient education for working-men to read the newspapers. If they form no more living conception

of what Poetry is than such as they get from the flippant criticism of a slashing article, they may learn satire, but not enthusiasm. If they limit their politics to the knowledge they may pick up from daily newspapers, which, with a few honourable exceptions, seem bound to pander to all the passions and prejudices of their respective factions, they will settle down into miserable partisans. And if working-men are to gain their notions of Christianity from the sneering, snarling gossip of the religious newspapers, I, for one, do not marvel that indignant infidelity is so common amongst them.

And let it be to us all a warning against that detracting, depreciating spirit which is the curse and bane both of the religion and the literature of our day—that spirit which has no sympathy with aught that is great beyond the pale of customary formalities, and sheds its blighting influence over all that is enthusiastic, and generous, and high-minded. It is possible for a sneer or a cavil to strike sometimes a superficial fact; I never knew the one or the other reach the deep heart and blessedness of truth.

## 13

## CONTEMPORARY FICTION

(FROM *The Athenaeum*)

THE critic who undertakes to summarize the qualities, and indicate the tendencies, of contemporary fiction has not an easy task. He can scarcely pretend to have an exhaustive acquaintance with a branch of literature so bewildering in extent and variety. He must confess to the exercise of selection, and own that any kind of selection may involve omissions of capital importance. Still, in the condition of the English novel at the present



time there are several salient and peculiar characteristics, which seem to point to the possibility of a generalization neither hopelessly vague nor hopelessly inept.

The 'average' novel, the mere literary narcotic, of one period is, of course, very like that of another. It is only on consideration of the comparatively small output of really high artistic purpose that one is compelled to ascribe to the fiction of our day a definite character of its own. Such consideration, however, does convince us that the novel as treated at present by such comparatively young men as Mr. Wells, Mr. Bennett, and Mr. Galsworthy, such positively young men as Mr. Cannan and Mr. Walpole, has certain general peculiarities both of matter and manner which distinguish it sharply from the English novel of any previous period. Fiction at the present moment exhibits a seriousness of aim, a tendency to social criticism, a tentativeness of form, and a fusion of earlier methods which all suggest that it is in a transitional period. Many of its characteristics are the direct or indirect result of the practice of the later Victorian writers. It will be advantageous, therefore, to institute a comparison between the fiction of to-day and the fiction (let us say) of twenty-five years ago.

In the last twenty years of the nineteenth century the English novel may be divided into three main groups. 'Realism' dominated one of these, and, accepted as a condition by Mr. Hardy, followed as an evangel by Mr. Moore, was probably the most important and fruitful force of the period. Romance had still a masterly exponent in Meredith, though his romantic view of life was tempered by a keen critical faculty; and a powerful (if unorthodox) exponent in Mr. Kipling, whose supposed alliance with 'realism' was of the left hand only. Meanwhile, with the

work of Mrs. Humphry Ward the novel was beginning to claim for itself the right to criticize contemporary life, and to attempt the solution of current 'problems'—religious, social, and ethical.

The fiction of our own day shows no such definite cleavage, and is patient of no such convenient classification. Its leading examples combine the qualities of all the three above divisions with certain modifications of method, so that in the work of most of the younger men we find realism, romance, and criticism blended into a new complex—one, by the way, typical of the modern distaste for categorical thinking. Mr. Wells, for instance, perhaps the most interesting and representative of our living novelists, holds equally of all three traditions. His material is usually of a frankly 'realistic' nature; but normal lower and middle-class life appears to him as neither colourless nor prosaic. It is, on the contrary, instinct to his imagination with incalculable possibilities of romance and adventure. He finds it 'not grey, but golden'. Moreover, he handles it with none of the impersonal aloofness of the academic realist. He is eager to generalize upon it, and subject it to criticism. He has realized that 'problems' are an integral part of our mental outfit, and he is curious to trace and depict their formative influence upon character. He differs, however, from the aforesaid 'problem' novelist by a desire rather to represent men and women as moulded by the vexed questions of to-day than to supply answers to the vexed questions themselves. He has modified the method of Mrs. Ward as much as he has modified the method of Meredith or Mr. Moore. Mr. Arnold Bennett is a less, but hardly less, marked example of similar tendencies. He chronicles the detail of life as meticulously, with as

subdued an emphasis, as the authors of *Jude the Obscure* and of *A Mummer's Wife*; but his chronicle is informed (as theirs are not) by a sense of progress. The lives whose evolution he develops are chapters in a history of civilization not planned or written from the standpoint of the pessimist. His men and women find their romance in their advance to clearer apprehension and stronger control of a world which in the intimate conviction of their creator is somehow good.

This fusion of method and critical absorption in the conditions and forces of modernity have produced valuable work besides that of Mr. Wells and Mr. Bennett. Under similar influences Mr. Onions has analysed with fine irony the mind of the commercial and political *arriviste*; Mr. Galsworthy has given us his studies of that curious increase of sensibility and widening of imaginative sympathy partially (but only partially) expressed by the term 'social conscience'; Mr. E. M. Forster has exploited the fundamental opposition between the perceptive and imperceptive, the dynamic and static temperaments, an opposition immemorial, indeed, but only now beginning to be estimated at its full importance. We are not, let it be remembered, proposing these writers for admiration as possessors of unparalleled genius, or assigning to their achievement a unique value. We are concerned only to signalize their break with Victorian categories of method, and their closeness to contemporary life.

Ours is emphatically a day of profound and rapid changes, mental and material, and in a common sense of change and the need of readjustment the group we have selected as typical exhibits another bond of union. Each member of it, according to his idiosyncrasy, has been impressed by the alteration in thought and the control

over life wrought by the last two decades. And this, it would seem, will not be a diminishing force in the future. The novel as a register of change will in all likelihood increase and multiply, and with its ever-widening field of observation will come of necessity developments and variations of form and manner. Some of them are already apparent. Mr. Wells, in his analysis of the contemporary mind, as influenced by the opening of huge vistas of progress, and burdened with the task of constructive thought, has been led to invent the peculiar discursive and autobiographical form of fiction which has given us *Tono Bungay*, *The New Machiavelli*, and *The Passionate Friends*. Mr. Bennett, proposing to himself the portrayal of men and women very gradually brought into touch with modernity, has found himself obliged to dispense with 'plot' (in the accepted sense of the term), to trace the growth of his characters from adolescence far into middle age, and, transcending the limits of the single book, to launch out into the trilogy. In Mr. Galsworthy's curious technique, with its perpetual shifting of the centre of interest and its (at first sight) irrelevant introduction of purely occasional characters, we divine the compulsion laid upon him by his sense of the need for a finer and wider edge to our more intimate personal and social relationships. Mr. Onions, Mr. Forster, and Mr. Cannan, all in one way or another, by their treatment of the fictional form, express their conviction that the novel is occupied with the assimilation of wholly new material.

Whether these developments will so affect the 'kind' as eventually to transform it into something utterly strange is an interesting question, and one that may well haunt readers of such books as Mr. Wells's *Passionate*

*Friends* or Mr. Cannan's *Old Mole*. Each book does show a tendency to pass into a mere discussion, to extend the parabasis<sup>1</sup> to the extinction of the play. Neither was published when, a few months ago, Professor Saintsbury raised the disquieting suggestion that the English novel, like the English poetic drama, may have completed its full cycle, and already be on its way to a natural death. But both might be held to give that suggestion support. In its period of adaptation to new circumstances and new needs the novel is certainly not immune from dangers. We must not forget, however, that the element of discourse has been inherent in much of our best fiction since the days of Fielding, and that a certain loss of balance and proportion in its employment is not necessarily a fatal symptom. Again, it is hardly likely that the attention of nearly all the more serious among our younger writers can remain focussed, as it is to-day, upon the social life and social questions of our own country. Since the beginning of the century we have, as a nation, been absorbed by self-criticism and the attempt to re-orient<sup>2</sup> ourselves to new conditions. The novel has only proved its adaptability and vitality by reflecting the process. As our interests change and widen, there seems no valid reason to doubt that it will prove itself capable of their assimilation and interpretation. Its freedom of form, however, and its critical spirit are likely to be permanent, since they correspond to the general trend of thought. Wayward spirits, we devoutly hope, there will always be to delight us with their fantasies as we are delighted by Mr. Algernon Blackwood or Mr. Temple Thurston ; strong

<sup>1</sup> Expression of the author's views. The term was applied to the chorus in Old Attic comedies.

<sup>2</sup> Again define our position.

spirits to simplify and recreate our vexed minds as they are simplified and recreated by Mr. Conrad, to whose genius, now at last, we hope, recognized by a wider public, the standpoint of this essay involves a grossly inadequate tribute.

But the main trend of the novel seems to us to lie for many years ahead in the direction we have indicated. On the whole, there is little to regret in the fact, if it prove one. Fiction may not, indeed, prove, as Mr. Wells claims in a recent pronouncement, the most potent literary instrument for a necessary clarification of our thought and extension and deepening of our sympathies, but in wise hands it should do very much for the furtherance of those aims.

## 14

## DEAD LANGUAGES

(D'ARCY THOMPSON, 1829-1902)

A DEAD language : what a sad and solemn expression ! Trite enough, I own ; but to a reflective mind, none the less sad and solemn ; for in the death of which it speaks are involved deaths untold, innumerable.

I can understand what is meant by ' a Dead Sea ' ; and should suppose it to be a sheet of water cut off from all intercourse with the main ocean ; never rising with its flow ; never sinking with its ebb ; never skimmed by the sail of commerce ; never flapped by wing of wandering bird ; undisturbed by the bustle of the restless world ; but slumbering in a desolate wilderness, far from the track of caravan, or railway, or steamship, in a stagnant and tide-forgotten, and unheeded repose.

The chance-directed efforts of an enterprising traveller

exhumed, but recently, the sculptured monuments of a dead civilization. We then learned that Nineveh and Babylon were not only the homes of conquering kings, but the seats of tranquil learning and treasured science, before ever a fleet had sailed from Aulis, or the eagles had promised empire to the watcher on the green Palatine.

The language of priestly and kingly Etruria is revealed to us only by dim marks upon vase or tablet, or by melancholy inscriptions on sepulchral stones. That is, indeed, a language unquestionably dead.

But can such a term be applied to that Hellenic speech that in the *Iliad* has rolled, like the great Father of Waters, its course unhindered down three thousand years ; that in Pindar still soars heavenwards, staring at the sun ; that rises and falls in Plato with the long, sequacious<sup>1</sup> music of an Aeolian lute ; that moves, stately and black-stoled, in Aeschylus ; that reverberates with laughter half-Olympian in Aristophanes ; that pierces with a trumpet-sound in Demosthenes ; that smells of crocuses in Theocritus ; that chirrup, like a balm-cricket, in Anacreon ? If it be dead, then what language is alive ?

Or again, is that old Italian speech dead and gone, that murmurs in Lucretius a ceaseless, solemn monotone of sea-shell sound ; that in Virgil flows, like the Eridanus, calmly but majestically through rich lowlands, fringed with tall poplars and rimmed with grassy banks ; that quivers to wild strings of passion in Catullus ; that wimples like a beck in Ovid ; that coos in Tibullus like the turtle ; that sparkles in Horace like a well-cut diamond ?

No : Heaven forbid it ! No ! Pile upon these twin

<sup>1</sup> Haunting.

daughters of Omphacian Zeus mountains of Grammars and Grammatical Exercises and Latin Readers and Greek Delectuses and Graduses and Dictionaries and Lexicons, until Ossa is dwarfed and Pelion is a wart. Let dull, colossal Pedantry—unconscious handmaid of the Abstract Bagman—with her tons of lumbal<sup>1</sup> lead press heavily on the prostrate forms. For a while they may lie, breathless and exhausted; but when that is grown again wherein their great strength lay, then will they make a mighty effort, and fling high in air the accumulated scoria<sup>2</sup> of ages: like a hailstorm in the surrounding sea will fall the fragments of a million gerund-stones; and the divine Twain will clothe themselves anew in their old strength and beauty, and sit down by the side of Zeus Omphaeus, exulting in glory.

No, no! The music of Homer will die with the choral chants of the Messiah, and the strains of Pindar with the symphonies of Beethoven; *una dies dabit exitio* Aristophanes and Cervantes and Molière; the Mantuan will go hand in hand to oblivion with the Florentine, *divinus Magister cum Discipulo diviniore*; the Metamorphoses of Ovid will decay with the fantastic tale of Ariosto and the music of Don Giovanni; Horace will fade out of ken, linked arm in arm with that sweet fellow-epicure, Montaigne; Antigone will be forgotten maybe a short century before Cordelia; and Plato and Aristotle will be entombed beneath the Mausoleum that covers for ever the thoughts of Bacon, Kepler, Newton, and Laplace.

Moreover, before the last echoes of Greece and Rome shall have died away, a Slavonian horde will throng the Morea and the Cyclades; and in some crumbling cathedral, Catholicism will have chanted, for the last

<sup>1</sup> Carried on the loins.

<sup>2</sup> Refuse of metals, dross.



time, its own *Nunc dimittis*, in the grand imperial language of the City of the Seven Hills.

When all this shall have come about, then may it be said with truth : ' Rome is dead ; and Athens is no more ! the words of whose wise ones went out into all lands, and the songs of whose singing-men to the ends of the world : their pomp and their glory have gone down with them into the pit.'

But, gentle Reader, long, long before this desolation shall have come about, you and I will be lying in a very sorry plight, with a strange and not beautiful expression on our human countenances : our quips, our cranks, our oddities all gone : quite chapfallen.<sup>1</sup> Yes, Friend, a very long while, indeed, before all this shall have come about.

## 15

## CLASSICAL EDUCATION

(THOMAS ARNOLD, 1795-1842)

A READER unacquainted with the real nature of a classical education will be in danger of undervaluing it, when he sees that so large a portion of time at so important a period of human life is devoted to the study of a few ancient writers whose works seem to have no direct bearing on the studies and duties of our own generation. For instance, although some provision is undoubtedly made at Rugby for acquiring a knowledge of modern history, yet the history of Greece and Rome is more studied than that of France and England ; and Homer and Virgil are certainly much more attended to than Shakespeare and Milton. This appears to many persons

<sup>1</sup> Dejected.

a great absurdity ; while others who are so far swayed by authority as to believe the system to be right, are yet unable to understand how it can be so. A Journal of Education may not be an unfit place for a few remarks on this subject.

It may be freely confessed that the first origin of classical education affords in itself no reasons for its being continued now. When Latin and Greek were almost the only written languages of civilized men, it is manifest that they must have furnished the subjects of all liberal education. The question therefore is wholly changed since the growth of a complete literature in other languages ; since France, and Italy, and Germany, and England, have each produced their philosophers, their poets, and their historians, worthy to be placed on the same level with those of Greece and Rome.

But although there is not the *same* reason now which existed three or four centuries ago for the study of Greek and Roman literature, yet there is another no less substantial. Expel Greek and Latin from your schools, and you confine the views of the existing generation to themselves and their immediate predecessors ; you will cut off so many centuries of the world's experience, and place us in the same state as if the human race had first come into existence in the year 1500. For it is nothing to say that a few learned individuals might still study classical literature ; the effect produced on the public mind would be no greater than that which has resulted from the labours of our Oriental scholars ; it would not spread beyond themselves ; and men in general, after a few generations, would know as little of Greece and Rome, as they do actually of China and Hindostan. But such an ignorance would be incalculably more to be regretted.

With the Asiatic mind we have no nearer connexion and sympathy than is derived from our common humanity. But the mind of the Greek and of the Roman is in all the essential points of its constitution our own ; and not only so, but it is our mind developed to an extraordinary degree of perfection. Wide as is the difference between us with respect to those physical instruments which minister to our uses or our pleasures ; although the Greeks and Romans had no steam-engines, no printing-presses, no mariner's compass, no telescopes, no microscopes, no gunpowder ; yet in our moral and political views, in those matters which must determine human character, there is a perfect resemblance in these respects. Aristotle, and Plato, and Thucydides, and Cicero, and Tacitus, are most untruly called ancient writers ; they are virtually our own countrymen and contemporaries, but have the advantage which is enjoyed by intelligent travellers, that their observation has been exercised in a field out of the reach of common men ; and that having thus seen in a manner with our eyes what we cannot see for ourselves, their conclusions are such as bear upon our own circumstances, while their information has all the charm of novelty, and all the value of a mass of new and pertinent facts, illustrative of the great science of the nature of civilized man.

Now when it is said that men in manhood so often throw their Greek and Latin aside, and that this very fact shows the uselessness of their early studies, it is much more true to say that it shows how completely the literature of Greece and Rome would be forgotten, if our system of education did not keep up the knowledge of it. But it by no means shows that system to be useless, unless it followed that when a man laid aside his

Greek and Latin books, he forgot also all that he had ever gained from them. This, however, is so far from being the case, that even where the results of a classical education are least tangible, and least appreciated even by the individual himself, still the mind often retains much of the effect of its early studies in the general liberality of its tastes and comparative comprehensiveness of its views and notions.

All this supposes, indeed, that classical instruction should be sensibly conducted ; it requires that a classical teacher should be fully acquainted with modern history and modern literature, no less than with those of Greece and Rome. What is, or perhaps what used to be, called a mere scholar, cannot possibly communicate to his pupils the main advantages of a classical education. The knowledge of the past is valuable, because without it our knowledge of the present and of the future must be scanty ; but if the knowledge of the past be confined wholly to itself—if, instead of being made to bear upon things around us, it be totally isolated from them, and so disguised by vagueness and misapprehension as to appear incapable of illustrating them, then indeed it becomes little better than laborious trifling, and they who declaim against it may be fully forgiven.

## 16

## THE VICISSITUDES OF LITERARY FAME

(FROM *The Times*)

THE vicissitudes of literary reputation are as inexplicable as they are unexpected. Some writers, acclaimed by their contemporaries, are forgotten by posterity ; others, unregarded in their lifetime, achieve posthumous honour ;

and even the greatest and most enduring renown may suffer temporary eclipse, as literary taste changes from generation to generation. Dante himself illustrates the truth of his own words, put into the mouth of the Umbrian miniature painter Oderisi, in the Circle of the Proud in Purgatory, that 'Earthly renown is but a blast of wind That now from hence, and now from thence is blown.' Shortly after Dante's death, the *Divina Commedia* was so highly esteemed that professorships were founded to explain it; but in the height of the Renaissance it was thought deficient in elegance and address, and in the seventeenth century its fame was well-nigh eclipsed. Addison, in his *Remarks upon several parts of Italy*, writes of Rimini without an allusion to Francesca; while a certain 'Maximilian Misson, Gent.', whose account of Italy is commended in Addison's preface, though he visited the poet's tomb at Ravenna and transcribed the well-known lines upon it, explains apologetically that he had done so 'for the Curiosity of the Rhimes' and because Dante was 'a Man of Quality'. In the eighteenth century Horace Walpole likened Dante to 'a Methodist parson in Bedlam'; Goethe found the *Inferno* horrible, the *Paradiso* dreadfully slow, and the *Purgatorio* neither one thing nor the other; Voltaire decried those who could admire 'feats of imagination so stupidly extravagant and barbarous'; and the Abbé Xavier Bettinelli branded the *Divina Commedia* as 'a vast ocean of scurrilities and repulsive barbarisms'. In a record of *Travels through Italy, containing New and Curious Observations on that Country*, published in 1766, the well-known painting in the Cathedral at Florence of Dante, book in hand, amid the scenes of his great work, with the Mount of Purgatory in the background, is described as a picture of Dante

walking in the fields before his house—a ‘ new and curious observation ’ which is suggestive of the oblivion into which the great Florentine and his works had then fallen. Now, however, the wheel has turned, and Dante has come to his own in Italy and elsewhere, as one of the great Immortals—not least in England during the latter part of the nineteenth century, in which there has arisen a numerous school of Dante lovers and interpreters. Time has justified the great poet’s own confidence in the greatness of his work.

Sometimes it has happened that upon a great literary reputation popular veneration has built a different sort of fame, as in the mediaeval legends which represented Virgil as a sorcerer and magician, or, on the strength of one famous poem, as a forerunner and prophet of Christ. Nor has even Virgil’s literary fame been free from fluctuations in later times. The criticism that he was a mere copyist of Homer called from Voltaire the retort that, if Homer wrote Virgil, that was his finest work. While Sainte-Beuve hails him as the poet and prophet of the Latin races, the German scholar Mommsen regards him as a popular poetaster ; but Tennyson represents more truly the general impression of cultured minds when he calls him ‘ Wielder of the stateliest measure ever moulded by the lips of man ’. But we need not search antiquity for examples of such vicissitudes. Macaulay moralizes over the fading reputation of Dr. Johnson’s writings, while his careless table-talk and peculiar mannerisms are still remembered. Matthew Arnold in turn doubts whether Macaulay’s fate is not to be ‘ an oracle for one generation and then of little or no account for ever ’ ; while a living critic, in estimating Matthew Arnold, finds it hard to believe that posterity will care

much for 'the dreary apologetics of undogmatism upon which he wasted so much precious time and energy'. Sometimes writers famous at one period for one kind of literary effort are remembered afterwards for another. Horace, now regarded as the master of lyric grace and felicity of diction, seems in the Middle Ages to have been chiefly famous as a moralist. As such he is included by Dante among the great poets in Limbo; and Dr. Moore tells us that out of several fourteenth-century commentators on that passage only one mentions Horace as a lyric poet; nor is there any evidence that Dante was acquainted with the *Odes*. Petrarch was in his own esteem and in that of his contemporaries a Virgilian and Ciceronian humanist; and it was on the fly-leaf of his *Virgil* that he recorded the death of the lady whom his vernacular lyrics have immortalized. Voltaire, says Lord Morley, 'was to himself and to his contemporaries a poet and dramatist before all else, the author of *Zaïre* and *Mahomet* rather than of *Candide* and the *Philosophical Dictionary*.' Popular taste in things literary, as in other matters, varies from generation to generation; and no two centuries, probably, see exactly eye to eye about even the greatest of literary craftsmen.

What share of oblivion or of memory has fate in store for the vast and widely diffused literary output of our own time? The novelists, whose work keeps pouring from the press in never-ending stream—how many of them will be even known by name fifty years hence? Will any of them stand out as Scott, Dickens, and Thackeray still stand out above their fellows? Will such a writer as George Meredith, for example, scarcely known to the mass of his countrymen in life, but hailed at his death by a chorus of expert and critical appreciation, ultimately

win a place among the great names of English literature? Or our 'minor poets', facile, active, and prolific in a generation which takes only a languid interest in poetry, and enjoying little honour in their own country save from friendly reviewers—will their fame leap to light in after ages? Mute they are not, but at present inglorious, and their future is all uncertain. There are signs that Tennyson is less widely read and known than he was. We should not like to think that the great poet of the Victorian era would ever suffer eclipse; but it may well be that posterity will be discriminating in its judgement upon his work. *In Memoriam* may live when the *Idylls of the King* are forgotten. Perhaps if we could foresee a list of 'the hundred best books' or a series of English classic reprints announced by some enterprising publisher a century hence, we should be able to answer some of these questions. All that can be predicated for certain is that literary taste, and with it literary reputation, is liable to change as generations pass; and if we ask whether this or that writer will gain or lose honour hereafter, these things 'lie upon the knees of the gods'. Some few great names, some few great works, have stood the test of time. The *Iliad*, *Odyssey* and *Aeneid*, the *Ethics* and the *Republic*, *Paradise Lost* and the *Pilgrim's Progress*, the *Agamemnon* and Shakespeare's plays, *Isaiah* and the *Psalms*—of these, among others, it may be said that their literary reputation is now unassailable, beyond the storms of change and chance. But of far the great majority of human writings we can only guess to what extent they will escape the vicissitudes of earthly fame.



## BOOKS AND READING

(THOMAS CARLYLE, 1795-1881)

CERTAINLY the Art of Writing is the most miraculous of ~~all things~~ man has devised. Odin's *Runes* were the first form of the work of a Hero; *Books*, written words, are still miraculous *Runes*, the latest form! In Books lies the *soul* of the whole Past Time; the articulate audible voice of the Past, when the body and material substance of it has altogether vanished like a dream. Mighty fleets and armies, harbours and arsenals, vast cities, high-domed, many-engined—they are precious, great: but what do they become? Agamemnon, the many Agamemnons, Pericleses, and their Greece; all is gone now to some ruined fragments, dumb mournful wrecks and blocks: but the Books of Greece! There Greece, to every thinker, still very literally lives; can be called up again into life. No magic Rune is stranger than a Book. All that mankind has done, thought, gained or been: ~~it is lying as in magic preservation in the pages of Books.~~ They are the chosen possession of men.

Do not Books still accomplish *miracles*, as *Runes* were fabled to do? They persuade men. Not the wretchedest circulating-library novel, which foolish girls thumb and con in remote villages, but will help to regulate the actual practical weddings and households of those foolish girls. So 'Celia' felt, so 'Clifford' acted: the foolish Theorem of Life, stamped into those young brains, comes out as a solid practice one day. Consider whether any *Rune* in the wildest imagination

of Mythologist ever did such wonders as, on the actual firm Earth, some Books have done! What built St. Paul's Cathedral? Look at the heart of the matter, it was that divine Hebrew Book—the word partly of the man Moses, an outlaw tending his Midianitish herds, four thousand years ago, in the wildernesses of Sinai! It is the strangest of things, yet nothing is truer. With the art of Writing, of which Printing is a simple, an inevitable and comparatively insignificant corollary, the true reign of miracles for mankind commenced. It related, with a wondrous new contiguity and perpetual closeness, the Past and Distant with the Present in time and place; all times and all places with this our actual Here and Now. All things were altered for men; all modes of important work of men: teaching, preaching, governing, and all else.

To look at Teaching, for instance, Universities are a notable, respectable product of the modern ages. Their existence too is modified, to the very basis of it, by the existence of Books. Universities arose while there were yet no Books procurable; while a man, for a single Book, had to give an estate of land. That, in those circumstances, when a man had some knowledge to communicate, he should do it by gathering the learners round him, face to face, was a necessity for him. If you wanted to know what Abelard knew, you must go and listen to Abelard. Thousands, as many as thirty thousand, went to hear Abelard and that metaphysical theology of his. And now for any other teacher who had also something of his own to teach, there was a great convenience opened: so many thousands eager to learn were already assembled yonder; of all places the best place for him was that. For any third teacher it was

better still ; and grew ever the better, the more teachers there came. It only needed now that the King took notice of this new phenomenon ; combined or agglomerated the various Schools into one School ; gave it edifices, privileges, encouragements, and named it *Universitas*, or School of all Sciences : the University of Paris, in its essential characters, was there. The model of all subsequent Universities ; which down even to these days, for six centuries now, have gone on to found themselves. Such, I conceive, was the origin of Universities.

It is clear, however, that with this simple circumstance, facility of getting Books, the whole conditions of the business from top to bottom were changed. Once invent Printing, you metamorphosed all Universities, or superseded them ! The Teacher needed not now to gather men personally round him, that he might *speak* to them what he knew : print it in a Book, and all learners far and wide, for a trifle, had it each at his own fireside, much more effectually to learn it !—Doubtless there is still peculiar Virtue in Speech ; even writers of Books may still, in some circumstances, find it convenient to speak also—witness our present meeting here ! There is, one would say, and must ever remain while man has a tongue, a distinct province for Speech, as well as for Writing and Printing. In regard to all things this must remain ; to Universities among others. But the limits of the two have nowhere yet been pointed out, ascertained ; much less put in practice : (the University which would completely take in that great new fact, of the existence of Printed Books, and stand on a clear footing for the Nineteenth Century as the Paris one did for the Thirteenth, has not yet come into existence. If we think of it, all that a University, or final highest

~~School can do for us, is still but what the first School began doing—teach us to read.~~ We learn to *read*, in various languages, in various sciences; we learn the alphabet and letters of all manner of Books. But the place where we are to get knowledge, even theoretic knowledge, is the Books themselves! It depends on what we read, after all manner of Professors have done their best for us. The University of these days is a collection of Books.)

## 18

THE BENEFITS DERIVED FROM DIFFICULT  
READING

(AUGUSTUS WILLIAM HARE, 1792-1834)

THEY who are in the habit of passing sentence upon books—and what ignoramus in our days does not deem himself fully qualified for sitting in the seat of the sinner?—are apt to think that they have condemned a work irretrievably, when they have pronounced it to be unintelligible. Unintelligible to whom? To themselves, the self-constituted judges. So that their sentence presumes their competency to pronounce it: and this, to every one save themselves, may be exceedingly questionable.

It is true, the very purpose for which a writer publishes his thoughts, is, that his readers should share them with him. Hence the primary requisite of a style is its intelligibility: that is to say, it must be capable of being understood. But intelligibility is a relative quality, varying with the capacity of the reader. The easiest book in a language is inaccessible to those who have never set foot within the pale of that language. The

simplest elementary treatise in any science is obscure and perplexing, until we become familiar with the terminology of that science. Thus every writer is entitled to demand a certain amount of knowledge in those for whom he writes, and a certain degree of dexterity in using the implements of thought. In this respect too there should not only be milk for babes, but also strong meat for those who are of full age. It is absurd to lay down a rule, that every man's thoughts should move at the self-same pace, the measure of which we naturally take from our own. Indeed, if it fatigues us to keep up with one who walks faster, and steps out more widely than we are wont to do, there may also be an excess on the other side, which is more intolerably wearisome.

Of course a writer, who desires to be popular, will not put on seven-league boots, with which he would soon escape out of sight. Yet the highest authority has told us, that 'the poet's eye Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven', taking the rapidity of vision as a type for that of the Imagination, which surely ought not to lag behind the fleetest of the senses. In logical processes indeed transitions are less sudden. If you wish to bind people with a chain of reasoning, you must not skip over too many of the links; or they may fail to perceive its cogency. Still it is wholesome and bracing for the mind, to have its faculties kept on the stretch. It is like the effect of a walk in Switzerland upon the body. Reading an Essay of Bacon's for instance, or a chapter of Aristotle or of Butler, if it be well and thoughtfully read, is much like climbing up a hill, and may do one the same sort of good. Set the tortoise to run against the hare; and, even if he does not overtake it, he will do more than he ever did previously, more than he would

ever have thought himself capable of doing. Set the hare to run with the tortoise : he falls asleep.

Suppose a person to have studied Xenophon and Thucydides, till he has attained to the same thorough comprehension of them both ; and this is so far from being an unwarrantable supposition, that the very difficulties of Thucydides tempt and stimulate an intelligent reader to form a more intimate acquaintance with him : which of the two will have strengthened the student's mind the most ? from which will he have derived the richest and most lasting treasures of thought ? Who, that has made friends with Dante, has not had his intellect nerved and expanded by following the pilgrim through his triple world ? and would Tasso have done as much for him ? The labour itself, which must be spent in order to understand Sophocles or Shakespeare, to search out their hidden beauties, to trace their labyrinthine movements, to dive into their bright, jewelled caverns, and converse with the sea-nymphs that dwell there, is its own abundant reward ; not merely from the enjoyment that accompanies it, but because such pleasure, indeed all pleasure that is congenial to our better nature, is refreshing and invigorating, like a draught of nectar from heaven. In such studies we imitate the example of the eagle, unsealing his eyesight by gazing at the sun.

South, in his sixth Sermon, after speaking of the difficulties which we have to encounter in the search after truth, urges the beneficial effect of those difficulties. ' Truth (he says) is a great stronghold, barred and fortified by God and Nature ; and diligence is properly the Understanding's laying siege to it ; so that, as in a kind of warfare, it must be perpetually upon the watch, observing all the avenues and passes to it, and accordingly

makes its approaches. Sometimes it thinks it gains a point; and presently again it finds itself baffled and beaten off: yet still it renews the onset, attacks the difficulty afresh, plants this reasoning, and that argument, this consequence, and that distinction, like so many intellectual batteries, till at length it forces a way and passage into the obstinate enclosed truth, that so long withstood and defied all its assaults. The Jesuits have a saying common amongst them, touching the institution of youth (in which their chief strength and talent lies), that *Vexatio dat intellectum*. As when the mind casts and turns itself restlessly from one thing to another, strains this power of the soul to apprehend, that to judge, another to divide, a fourth to remember—thus tracing out the nice and scarce observable difference of some things, and the real agreement of others, till at length it brings all the ends of a long and various hypothesis together, sees how one part coheres with and depends upon another, and so clears off all the appearing contrarieties and contradictions, that seemed to lie cross and uncouth, and to make the whole unintelligible—this is the laborious and vexatious inquest, that the soul must make after science. For Truth, like a stately dame, will not be seen, nor show herself at the first visit, nor match with the understanding upon an ordinary courtship or address. Long and tedious attendances must be given, and the hardest fatigues endured and digested: nor did ever the most pregnant wit in the world bring forth anything great, lasting, and considerable, without some pain and travail, some pangs and throes before the delivery. Now all this that I have said is to show the force of diligence in the investigation of truth, and particularly of the noblest of all truths, which is that of religion.

For my own part, I have ever gained the most profit, and the most pleasure also, from the books which have made me think the most : and, when the difficulties have once been overcome, these are the books which have struck the deepest root, not only in my memory and understanding, but likewise in my affections. For this point too should be taken into account. We are wont to think slightly of that, which it costs us a slight effort to win. When a maiden is too forward, her admirer deems it time to draw back. Whereas whatever has associated itself with the arousal and activity of our better nature, with the important and memorable epochs in our lives, whether moral or intellectual, is—to cull a sprig from the beautiful passage in which Wordsworth describes the growth of Michael's love for his native hills,—

Our living being, even more  
Than our own blood, and—could it less?—retains  
Strong hold on our affections, is to us  
A pleasurable feeling of blind love,  
The pleasure which there is in life itself.

If you would fertilize the mind, the plough must be driven over and through it. The gliding of wheels is easier and rapider, but only makes it harder and more barren. Above all, in the present age of light reading, that is, of reading hastily, thoughtlessly, indiscriminately, unfruitfully, when most books are forgotten as soon as they are finished, and very many sooner, it is well if something heavier is cast now and then into the midst of the literary public. This may scare and repel the weak : it will rouse and attract the stronger, and increase their strength by making them exert it. In the sweat of the brow is the mind as well as the body to eat its bread.  
*Nil sine magno Musa labore dedit mortalibus.*



Are writers then to be studiously difficult, and to tie knots for the mere purpose of compelling their readers to untie them? Not so. Let them follow the bent of their own minds. Let their style be the faithful mirror of their thoughts. Some minds are too rapid and vehement and redundant to flow along in lucid transparence; some have to break over rocks, and to force a way through obstacles, which would have dammed them in. Tacitus could not write like Caesar. Niebuhr could not write like Goldsmith.

## 19

## PERIODS IN THE HISTORY OF A LANGUAGE

(AUGUSTUS WILLIAM HARE, 1792-1834)

THERE are three genial and generative periods in the history of language.

The first, and far the most important, is that in which the great elementary processes are gone through: when the laws and form of the language are determined, and the body of the thoughts of a people, whether arising out of the depths of its own character, or awakened by the objects around it, fashion and find their appropriate utterance. This is a period of which little notice can be preserved. We are seldom able to watch the processes while they are working. In a primitive, homogeneous language that working is over, before it comes forward in a substantial, permanent shape, and takes its seat in the halls of Literature: and even in a composite language, like our own, arising out of the confluence and fusion of two, we have scanty means for observing their mutual action upon each other. We see them flowing for a while side by side: then both vanish like the Rhine

at Laufenburg : and anon the mingled streams start into sight again, though perhaps not quite thoroughly blended, but each in a manner preserving a distinct current for a time, as the Rhone and Saone do at their junction. In this stage a language is rich in expressions for outward objects, and for simple feelings and actions, but contains few abstract terms, and not many compound words, except such as denote obvious combinations of frequent occurrence. The laws and principles of such compositions, however, are already established : and here and there instances are found of some of the simplest abstract terms ; after the analogy of which others are subsequently framed, according to the growing demands of reflection. Such is the state of our own language in the age of Chaucer : such is that of the German in the *Nibelungen-Lay* ; and that of the Greek in Hesiod and in Homer ; in the latter of whom, however, we already hear the snorting of the horses that are drawing on the car of Apollo, and see the sparks that flash up beneath their feet, as they rush along the pavement of heaven.

Thus far a language has very little that is arbitrary in it, very little betokening the conscious power and action of man. It owes its origin, not to the thoughts and the will of individuals, but to an instinct actuating a whole people : it expresses what is common to them all : it has sprung out of their universal wants, and lives in their hearts. But after a while an intellectual aristocracy come forward, and frame a new language of their own. The princes and lords of thought shoot forth their winged words into regions beyond the scan of the people. They require a gold coinage, in addition to the common currency. This is avowed by Sir Thomas Brown in his Preface. ' Nor have we addressed our pen or style to

the people (whom books do not redress, and are this way incapable of reduction), but to the knowing and leading part of learning ; as well understanding—except they be watered from higher regions and fructifying meteors of knowledge, these weeds must lose their alimantal sap, and wither of themselves.' The Imagination, finding out its powers and its office, and feeling its freedom, begins to fashion and mould and combine things according to its own laws. It is no longer content to reflect the outward world and its forms just as it has received them, with such modifications and associations alone as have been bestowed on them in the national mythology. It seizes the elements both of outward nature and of human, and mixes them up in its crucible, and bakes them anew in its furnace. It discerns within itself, that there are other shapes and visions of grandeur and beauty, beside those which roll before the eye—that there are other sympathies, and deeper harmonies and discords : and for this its new creation it endeavours to devise fitting symbols in words. This is the age of genial power in poetry, and of a luxuriant richness in language ; the age of Aeschylus and Aristophanes ; the age of Ennius and Lucretius—who, however, must be measured by the Roman scale ; the age of Shakespeare and Milton. It may be termed the heroic age of language, coming after its golden age, during which, from the unbroken unity of life, there was no call or room for heroes. Custom has not yet marked out the limits within which the plastic powers of the language must be restrained : and they who feel their own strength, and that of their weapon, fancy there is nothing they may not achieve with it. Of the new words formed in this age, many find an echo long after amid the heights of literature ; some are so peculiar,

they can fit no place except the one they were made for ; many fall to the ground and are forgotten, when the scythe of summer mows off the rich bloom of spring.

The third great period in the history of a language is that of its development as an instrument of reason and reflection. This is the age of verbal substantives, and of abstract derivatives from adjectives, formed, in a homogeneous language, after the analogy of earlier examples, but multiplied far beyond what had sufficed for a simpler, less speculative generation. The dawn of this age we see struggling through the darkness in Thucydides ; the difficulties of whose style arise in great measure from his efforts to express thoughts so profound and farstretching in a language scarcely adapted as yet to such purposes. For, though potentially it had an indefinite wealth in general terms, that wealth was still lying for the most part in the mine : and the simple epical accumulation of sentences, by means of connective particles, was only beginning to give way to a compacter, more logical structure, by the particles of causality and modality. In England, as indeed throughout the whole of modern Europe, the order assigned by Nature for the successive unfolding of the various intellectual powers, in nations as well as individuals—an order which, unless disturbed by extraneous causes, would needs be far more perceptible, as all general laws are, in an aggregate than in a single unit—was in some degree altered by the influx of the traditional knowledge amassed by prior ages. That knowledge, acting more powerfully, and with more certain benefit, on the reasoning faculties than on the imaginative, accelerated the growth of the former, and brought them to an earlier maturity ; a result owing mainly to the existence of a large class, who, being the chief depositaries

of knowledge, were specially led by their profession, and by the critical and stirring circumstances of the times, to a diligent pursuit of all studies concerning the moral and spiritual nature of man. Hence the philosophical cultivation of our language coincided with its poetical cultivation: and this prematurity was the more easily attainable, inasmuch as the mass of our philosophical words were not of home growth, but imported ready-grown from abroad; so that, like oranges, they might be in season along with primroses and violets. Yet the natural order was so far upheld, while the great age of our poetry is comprised in the last quarter of the sixteenth, and the first quarter of the seventeenth century, the great age of our philosophy and theology reaches down till near the close of the latter. Milton stands alone, and forms a link between the two.

When a nation reaches its noon, however, the colour of objects lose much of their brightness; and even their forms and masses stand out less boldly and strikingly. It occupies itself rather in examining and analysing their details. Finding itself already rich, it lives on its capital, instead of making fresh ventures to increase it, and boasts that this is the only rational, gentlemanly way of living. The superabundant activity, which it will not employ in anything positive, finds a vent in negativeness—in denying that any previous state of society was comparable to its own, and in issuing peremptory vetoes against all who would try to raise it higher. This is the age when an academy will lay down laws dictatorily, and proclaim what may be said, and what must not, what may be thought, and what must not—the age when men will scoff at the madness of Xerxes, yet themselves try to fling their chains over the ever-rolling, irrepressible ocean of thought.

Nay, they will scoop out a mimic sea in their pleasure-ground, and make it ripple and bubble, and spout up prettily into the air, and then fancy that they are taming the Atlantic; which, however, keeps advancing upon them, until it sweeps them away with their toys. The interdict against every new word or expression during the century previous to the Revolution in France was only one chapter of the interdict which society then enacted against everything genial: and here too that restlessness, which can never be wholly allayed, became negative; and all that was genial was in .sin. The dull flat of the *Henriade* abutted on the foaming hellpool of the *Pucelle*.

The futility of all attempts to check the growth of a language, so long at least as a nation continues to exercise any activity even in the lower departments of thought, is proved by the successive editions of the Dictionary published by the French Academy. Not content with crushing and stifling freedom in the State, Richelieu's ambition aimed at becoming autocrat of the French language. He would have had no word uttered throughout the realm, until he had countersigned it. But ancient usage, and the wants of progressive civilization were too mighty for him. Every time the Academy have issued their Dictionary afresh, they have found themselves compelled to admit a number of new words into their censorial register: and in the last fifty years more especially a vast influx has taken place. If we look into their modern writers, even into those who, like Chateaubriand, while they acknowledge the power of the present, still retain a reverent allegiance to the past, we find new words ever sprouting up: and the popular literature of *la jeune France*, of those who are the minions, deeming themselves the lords, of the present, seems in language

and style, as well as in morals, to bear the character of slavery that has burst its bonds, to be as it were an insurrection of intellectual negroes, rioting in the licence of a lawless, fetterless will.

## 20

## OF TRUTH

(FRANCIS BACON, 1561-1626)

'WHAT is truth?' said jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer. Certainly there be that delight in giddiness, and count it a bondage to fix a belief—affecting freewill in thinking, as well as in acting—and, though the sects of philosophers of that kind be gone, yet there remain certain discoursing<sup>1</sup> wits which are of the same veins, though there be not so much blood in them as was in those of the ancients. But it is not only the difficulty and labour which men take in finding out of truth; nor again, that, when it is found, it imposeth upon men's thoughts, that doth bring lies in favour; but a natural, though corrupt love of the lie itself. One of the later schools of the Grecians examineth the matter, and is at a stand to think what should be in it, that men should love lies, where neither they make for pleasure, as with poets, nor for advantage, as with the merchant, but for the lie's sake. But I cannot tell; this same truth is a naked and open daylight, that doth not show the masks, and mummeries, and triumphs of the world, half so stately and daintily as candlelights. Truth may perhaps come to the price of a pearl, that showeth best by day; but it will not rise to the price of a diamond.

<sup>1</sup> Argumentative.

or carbuncle, that showeth best in varied lights. A mixture of a lie doth ever add pleasure. Doth any man doubt, that if there were taken out of men's minds vain opinions, flattering hopes, false valuations, imaginations as one would, and the like, but it would leave the minds of a number of men poor shrunk things, full of melancholy and indisposition, and unpleasing to themselves? One of the fathers, in great severity, called poesy '*vinum daemonum*',<sup>1</sup> because it filleth the imagination, and yet is but with the shadow of a lie. But it is not the lie that passeth through the mind, but the lie that sinketh in and setteth in it that doth the hurt, such as we spake of before. But howsoever these things are thus in men's depraved judgements and affections, yet truth, which only doth judge itself, teacheth that the inquiry of truth, which is the love-making, or wooing of it—the knowledge of truth, which is the presence of it—and the belief of truth, which is the enjoying of it—is the sovereign good of human nature. The first creature of God, in the works of the days, was the light of the sense, the last was the light of reason, and His Sabbath work, ever since, is the illumination of His spirit. First He breathed light upon the face of the matter, or chaos, then He breathed light into the face of man; and still He breatheth and inspireth light into the face of His chosen. The poet, that beautified the sect that was otherwise inferior to the rest, saith yet excellently well, 'It is a pleasure to stand upon the shore, and to see ships tossed upon the sea; a pleasure to stand in the window of a castle, and to see a battle, and the adventures thereof below; but no pleasure is comparable to the standing upon the vantage ground of truth (a hill not to be commanded,<sup>2</sup> and where

<sup>1</sup> The wine of demons.

<sup>2</sup> Overtopped.



the air is always clear and serene), and to see the errors, and wanderings, and mists, and tempests, in the vale below ; ' so always that this prospect be with pity, and not with swelling or pride. Certainly it is heaven upon earth to have a man's mind move in charity, rest in providence, and turn upon the poles of truth.

To pass from theological and philosophical truth to the truth of civil business,<sup>1</sup> it will be acknowledged, even by those that practise it not, that clear and round <sup>2</sup> dealing is the honour of man's nature, and that mixture of falsehood is like alloy in coin of gold and silver, which may make the metal work the better, but it embaseth it ; for these winding and crooked courses are the goings of the serpent, which goeth basely upon the belly, and not upon the feet. There is no vice that doth so cover a man with shame as to be found false and perfidious ; and therefore Montaigne saith prettily, when he inquired the reason why the word of the lie should be such a disgrace, and such an odious charge, ' If it be well weighed, to say that a man lieth, is as much to say that he is brave towards God, and a coward towards man ; for a lie faces God, and shrinks from man.' Surely the wickedness of falsehood and breach of faith cannot possibly be so highly expressed as in that it shall be the last peal<sup>3</sup> to call the judgements of God upon the generations of men : it being foretold, that when ' Christ cometh ', he shall not ' find faith upon earth '.

<sup>1</sup> The conduct of citizens.

<sup>3</sup> Appeal.

<sup>2</sup> Straightforward.

## ON SPEAKING THE TRUTH

(JOSEPH ADDISON, 1672-1719)

THERE is nothing, says Plato, so delightful as the hearing or the speaking of truth. For this reason there is no conversation so agreeable as that of the man of integrity, who hears without any intention to betray, and speaks without any intention to deceive.

Among all the accounts which are given of Cato, I do not remember one that more redounds to his honour than the following passage related by Plutarch. As an advocate was pleading the cause of his client before one of the praetors, he could only produce a single witness in a point where the law required the testimony of two persons, upon which the advocate insisted on the integrity of that person whom he had produced ; but the praetor told him that where the law required two witnesses he would not accept of one, though it were Cato himself. Such a speech from a person who sat at the head of a court of justice, while Cato was still living, shows us, more than a thousand examples, the high reputation this great man had gained among his contemporaries upon the account of his sincerity.

When such an inflexible integrity is a little softened and qualified by the rules of conversation and good breeding, there is not a more shining virtue in the whole catalogue of social duties. A man, however, ought to take great care not to polish himself out of his veracity, nor to refine his behaviour to the prejudice of his virtue.

This subject is exquisitely treated in the most elegant sermon of the great British preacher. I shall beg leave

to transcribe out of it two or three sentences as a proper introduction to a very curious letter, which I shall make the chief entertainment of this speculation.

‘The old English plainness and sincerity, that generous integrity of nature, and honesty of disposition, which always argues true greatness of mind, and is usually accompanied with undaunted courage and resolution, is in a great measure lost among us.

‘The dialect of conversation is nowadays so swelled with vanity and compliment, and so surfeited (as I may say) of expressions of kindness and respect, that if a man that lived an age or two ago should return into the world again, he would really want a dictionary to help him to understand his own language, and to know the true intrinsic value of the phrase in fashion ; and would hardly, at first, believe at what a low rate the highest strains and expressions of kindness imaginable do commonly pass in current payment ; and when he should come to understand it, it would be a great while before he could bring himself with a good countenance and a good conscience to converse with men upon equal terms and in their own way.’

I have by me a letter which I look upon as a great curiosity, and which may serve as an exemplification to the foregoing passage, cited out of this most excellent prelate. It is said to have been written in King Charles II’s reign by the Ambassador of Bantam, a little after his arrival in England.

MASTER,—The people where I now am have tongues farther from their hearts than from London to Bantam, and thou knowest the inhabitants of one of these places does not know what is done in the other. They call thee and thy subjects barbarians, because we speak what we

mean, and account themselves a civilized people because they speak one thing and mean another. Truth they call barbarity, and falsehood politeness. Upon my first landing, one who was sent from the king of this place to meet me told me, that he was extremely sorry for the storm I had met with just before my arrival. I was troubled to hear him grieve and afflict himself upon my account, but in less than a quarter of an hour he smiled, and was as merry as if nothing had happened. Another who came with him told me, by my interpreter, he should be glad to do me any service that lay in his power. Upon which I desired him to carry one of my portmanteaux for me; but instead of serving me according to his promise, he laughed and bid another do it. I lodged the first week at the house of one who desired me to think myself at home, and to consider his house as my own. Accordingly, I the next morning began to knock down one of the walls of it, in order to let in the fresh air, and had packed up some of the household goods, of which I had intended to make thee a present. But the false varlet no sooner saw me falling to work, but he sent word to desire me to give over, for that he would have no such doings in his house.

At my first going to Court, one of the great men almost put me out of countenance by asking ten thousand pardons of me for only treading by accident upon my toe. They call this kind of lie a compliment, for when they are civil to a great man, they tell him untruths, for which thou wouldst order any of thy officers of state to receive a hundred blows upon his foot. I do not know how I shall negotiate anything with this people, since there is so little credit to be given to them. When I go to see the King's scribe, I am generally told that he is

not at home, though perhaps I saw him go into his house almost the very moment before. Thou wouldst fancy that the whole nation are physicians, for the first question they always ask me, is, how I do ? I have this question put to me above a hundred times a day. Nay, they are not only thus inquisitive after my health, but wish it in a more solemn manner, with a full glass in their hands, every time I sit with them at table, though at the same time they would persuade me to drink their liquors in such quantities as I have found by experience will make me sick. They often pretend to pray for thy health also in the same manner ; but I have more reason to expect it from the goodness of thy constitution than the sincerity of their wishes. May thy slave escape in safety from this double-tongued race of men, and live to lay himself once more at thy feet in thy royal city of Bantam.

## 22

## OF REVENGE

(FRANCIS BACON, 1561-1626)

REVENGE is a kind of wild justice, which the more Man's nature runs to, the more ought law to weed it out : for as for the first wrong, it does but offend the law ; but the revenge of that wrong putteth the law out of office. Certainly, in taking revenge a man is but even with his enemy, but in passing it over he is superior ; for it is a prince's part to pardon : and Solomon, I am sure, saith, ' It is the glory of a man to pass by an offence.' That which is past is gone and irrecoverable, and wise men have enough to do with things present and to come ; therefore they do but trifle with themselves, that labour

in past matters. There is no man doth a wrong for the wrong's sake, but thereby to purchase himself profit, or pleasure, or honour, or the like ; therefore why should I be angry with a man for loving himself better than me ? And if any man should do wrong, merely out of ill-nature, why, yet it is but like the thorn or brier, which prick and scratch, because they can do no other. The most tolerable sort of revenge is for those wrongs which there is no law to remedy : but then, let a man take heed the revenge be such as there is no law to punish ; else a man's enemy is still beforehand, and it is two for one.

Some, when they take revenge, are desirous the party should know whence it cometh : this is the more generous ; for the delight seemeth to be not so much in doing the hurt, as in making the party repent : but base and crafty cowards are like the arrow that flieth in the dark.

Cosmus,<sup>1</sup> Duke of Florence, had a desperate<sup>2</sup> saying against perfidious or neglecting friends, as if those wrongs were unpardonable. 'You shall read', saith he, 'that we are commanded to forgive our enemies, but you never read that we are commanded to forgive our friends.' But yet the spirit of Job was in a better tune : 'Shall we', saith he, 'take good at God's hands, and not be content to take evil also ?' and so of friends in a proportion. This is certain, that a man that studieth revenge keeps his own wounds green, which otherwise would heal and do well. Public revenges are for the most part fortunate ; as that for the death of Caesar ; for the death of Pertinax ; for the death of Henry III of France ; and many more. But in private revenges it is not so ; nay, rather vindictive persons live the life of witches, who, as they are mischievous, so end they unfortunate.

<sup>1</sup> Cosmo de' Medici, created Duke 1537.

<sup>2</sup> Exaggerated.

## OF FRIENDSHIP

(FRANCIS BACON)

It had been hard for him that spake it to have put more truth and untruth together in few words, than in that speech, 'Whosoever is delighted in solitude is either a wild beast or a god'; for it is most true, that a natural and secret hatred and aversion<sup>1</sup> towards society, in any man, hath somewhat of the savage beast; but it is most untrue, that it should have any character at all of the divine nature, except it proceed, not out of a pleasure in solitude, but out of a love and desire to sequester a man's self for a higher conversation;<sup>2</sup> such as is found to have been falsely and feignedly in some of the heathens—as Epimenides, the Candian; Numa, the Roman; Empedocles, the Sicilian; and Apollonius, of Tyana; and truly, and really, in divers of the ancient hermits and holy fathers of the Church. But little do men perceive what solitude is, and how far it extendeth; for a crowd is not company, and faces are but a gallery of pictures, and talk but a tinkling cymbal, where there is no love. The Latin adage meeteth<sup>3</sup> with it a little: 'Magna civitas, magna solitudo,'—because in a great town friends are scattered, so that there is not that fellowship, for the most part, which is in less neighbourhoods; but we may go farther, and affirm most truly, that it is a mere and miserable solitude to want true friends, without which the world is but a wilderness; and, even in this sense also of solitude, whosoever, in

<sup>1</sup> Disinclination.<sup>2</sup> Way of living.<sup>3</sup> Agrees.

the frame of his nature and affections, is unfit for friendship, he taketh it of the beast, and not from humanity.

A principal fruit of friendship is the ease and discharge of the fulness of the heart, which passions of all kinds do cause and induce. We know diseases of stoppings and suffocations are the most dangerous in the body ; and it is not much otherwise in the mind : you may take sarza<sup>1</sup> to open the liver, steel to open the spleen, flower of sulphur for the lungs, castoreum for the brain ; but no receipt openeth the heart but a true friend, to whom you may impart griefs, joys, fears, hopes, suspicions, counsels, and whatsoever lieth upon the heart to oppress it, in a kind of civil shrift or confession.

It is a strange thing to observe how high a rate great kings and monarchs do set upon this fruit of friendship whereof we speak—so great, as they purchase it many times at the hazard of their own safety and greatness : for princes, in regard of the distance of their fortune from that of their subjects and servants, cannot gather this fruit, except, to make themselves capable thereof, they raise some persons to be as it were companions, and almost equals to themselves, which many times sorteth to<sup>2</sup> inconvenience. The modern languages give unto such persons the name of favourites, or privadoes<sup>3</sup>,—as if it were matter of grace or conversation ; but the Roman name attaineth the true use and cause thereof, naming them ‘*participes curarum*’ ; for it is that which tieth the knot : and we see plainly that this hath been done, not by weak and passionate princes only, but by the wisest and most politic that ever reigned, who have oftentimes joined to themselves some of their servants, whom both themselves have called friends, and allowed others like-

<sup>1</sup> Sarsaparilla.

<sup>2</sup> Results in.

<sup>3</sup> Favourites (Spanish).



wise to call them in the same manner, using the word which is received between private men.

L. Sylla, when he commanded Rome, raised Pompey, after surnamed The Great, to that height that Pompey vaunted himself for Sylla's over-match ; for when he had carried the consulship for a friend of his, against the pursuit of Sylla, and that Sylla did a little resent thereat, and began to speak great, Pompey turned upon him again, and in effect bade him be quiet ; for that more men adored the sun rising than the sun setting. With Julius Caesar, Decimus Brutus had obtained that interest, as he set him down in his testament for heir in remainder after his nephew ; and this was the man that had power with him to draw him forth to his death ; for when Caesar would have discharged the senate, in regard of some ill presages, and especially a dream of Calpurnia, this man lifted him gently by the arm out of his chair, telling him he hoped he would not dismiss the senate till his wife had dreamed a better dream ; and it seemed his favour was so great, as Antonius, in a letter, which is recited verbatim in one of Cicero's Philippics, called him '*venefica*', witch, as if he had enchanted Caesar. Augustus raised Agrippa, though of mean birth, to that height, as, when he consulted with Maecenas about the marriage of his daughter Julia, Maecenas took the liberty to tell him, that he must either marry his daughter to Agrippa, or take away his life—there was no third way, he had made him so great. With Tiberius Caesar, Sejanus had ascended to that height as they two were termed and reckoned as a pair of friends. Tiberius, in a letter to him, saith, '*Haec pro amicitia nostra non occultavi*' ; and the whole senate dedicated an altar to Friendship, as to a goddess, in respect of the great

dearness of friendship between them two. The like, or more, was between Septimus Severus and Plautianus; for he forced his eldest son to marry the daughter of Plautianus, and would often maintain Plautianus in doing affronts to his son; and did write also, in a letter to the senate, by these words, 'I love the man so well, as I wish he may overlive me.' Now, if these princes had been as a Trajan, or a Marcus Aurelius, a man might have thought that this had proceeded of an abundant goodness of nature: but being men so wise, of such strength and severity of mind, and so extreme lovers of themselves, as all these were, it proveth, most plainly, that they found their own felicity, though as great as ever happened to mortal men, but as a half piece, except they might have a friend to make it entire; and yet, which is more, they were princes that had wives, sons, nephews, yet all these could not supply the comfort of friendship.

It is not to be forgotten what Comineus<sup>1</sup> observeth of his first master, Duke Charles the Hardy—namely, that he would communicate his secrets with none; and, least of all, those secrets which troubled him most. Whereupon he goeth on, and saith, that towards his latter time, that closeness did impair and a little perish his understanding. Surely Comineus might have made the same judgement also, if it had pleased him, of his second master, Louis XI, whose closeness was indeed his tormentor. The parable of Pythagoras is dark, but true, 'Cor ne edito'—eat not the heart. Certainly, if a man would give it a hard phrase, those that want friends to open themselves unto are cannibals of their own hearts; but one thing is most admirable (wherewith I will conclude

<sup>1</sup> Philippe de Comines (1445-1509).

this first fruit of friendship), which is, that this communicating of a man's self to his friend works two contrary effects, for it redoubleth joys, and cutteth griefs in halves; for there is no man that imparteth his joys to his friend, but he joyeth the more, and no man that imparteth his griefs to his friend, but he grieveth the less. So that it is, in truth of operation<sup>1</sup> upon a man's mind, of like virtue as the alchymists use<sup>2</sup> to attribute to their stone for man's body, that it worketh all contrary effects, but still to the good and benefit of nature. But yet, without praying in aid<sup>3</sup> of alchymists, there is a manifest image of this in the ordinary course of nature; for, in bodies,<sup>4</sup> union strengtheneth and cherisheth any natural action, and, on the other side, weakeneth and dulleth any violent impression—and even so is it of minds.

The second fruit of friendship is healthful and sovereign for the understanding, as the first is for the affections; for friendship maketh indeed a fair day in the affections from<sup>5</sup> storm and tempests, but it maketh daylight in the understanding, out of darkness and confusion of thoughts. Neither is this to be understood only of faithful counsel, which a man receiveth from his friend; but before you come to that, certain it is, that whosoever hath his mind fraught with many thoughts, his wits and understanding do clarify and break up, in the communication and discoursing with another; he tosseth his thoughts more easily—he marshalleth them more orderly—he seeth how they look when they are turned into words—finally, he waxeth wiser than himself; and that more by an hour's discourse than by a day's meditation. It was well said by Themistocles to

<sup>1</sup> In the real effect produced.

<sup>2</sup> Are wont.

<sup>3</sup> Asking for the help.

<sup>4</sup> Material bodies.

<sup>5</sup> Instead of.

the King of Persia, 'That speech was like cloth of Arras, opened and put abroad'—whereby the imagery doth appear in figure,<sup>1</sup> whereas in thought they lie but as in packs. Neither is this second fruit of friendship, in opening the understanding, restrained only to such friends as are able to give a man counsel (they indeed are best), but even without that a man learneth of himself, and bringeth his own thoughts to light, and whetteth his wits as against a stone, which itself cuts not. In a word, a man were better relate himself to a statue or picture, than to suffer his thoughts to pass in smother.

Add now, to make this second fruit of friendship complete, that other point which lieth more open, and falleth within vulgar observation—which is faithful counsel from a friend. Heraclitus saith well, in one of his enigmas, 'Dry light is ever the best'; and certain it is, that the light that a man receiveth by counsel from another is drier and purer than that which cometh from his own understanding and judgement, which is ever infused and drenched in his affections and customs. So as there is as much difference between the counsel that a friend giveth, and that a man giveth himself, as there is between the counsel of a friend and of a flatterer; for there is no such flatterer as is a man's self, and there is no such remedy against flattery of a man's self as the liberty<sup>2</sup> of a friend. Counsel is of two sorts; the one concerning manners, the other concerning business: for the first, the best preservative to keep the mind in health is the faithful admonition of a friend. The calling of a man's self to a strict account is a medicine sometimes too piercing and corrosive;<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The pattern is clearly shown.

<sup>2</sup> Frank criticism.

<sup>3</sup> Caustic, burning. (This was a common word, shortened to *corsive*, or *corsy*.)

reading good books of morality is a little flat and dead ; observing our faults in others is sometimes improper for our case ; but the best receipt (best, I say, to work, and best to take) is the admonition of a friend. It is a strange thing to behold what gross errors and extreme absurdities many (especially of the greater sort) do commit, for want of a friend to tell them of them, to the great damage both of their fame and fortune : for, as St. James saith, they are as men ' that look sometimes into a glass, and presently forget their own shape and favour '.<sup>1</sup> As for business, a man may think, if he will, that two eyes see no more than one ; or, that a gamester seeth always more than a looker-on ; or, that a man in anger is as wise as he that hath said over the four-and-twenty letters ; or, that a musket may be shot off as well upon the arm as upon a rest ; and such other fond and high<sup>2</sup> imaginations, to think himself all in all : but when all is done, the help of good counsel is that which setteth business straight ; and if any man think that he will take counsel, but it shall be by pieces ; asking counsel in one business of one man, and in another business of another man ; it is as well (that is to say, better, perhaps, than if he asked none at all), but he runneth two dangers ; one, that he shall not be faithfully counselled—for it is a rare thing, except it be from a perfect and entire friend, to have counsel given, but such as shall be bowed and crooked to some ends which he hath that giveth it ; the other, that he shall have counsel given, hurtful and unsafe (though with good meaning), and mixed partly of mischief and partly of remedy—even as if you would call a physician, that is thought good for the cure of the disease you complain of, but is unacquainted with

<sup>1</sup> Features, looks.

<sup>2</sup> Foolish and conceited.

your body—and therefore, may put you in a way for present cure, but overthroweth your health in some other kind, and so cure the disease, and kill the patient : but a friend, that is wholly acquainted with a man's estate, will beware, by furthering any present business, how he dasheth upon other inconvenience—and, therefore, rest not upon scattered counsels, for they will rather distract and mislead than settle and direct.

After these two noble fruits of friendship (peace in the affections and support of the judgement), followeth the last fruit, which is, like the pomegranate, full of many kernels—I mean, aid and bearing a part in all actions and occasions. Here, the best way to represent to life the manifold use of friendship, is to cast<sup>1</sup> and see how many things there are which a man cannot do himself ; and then it will appear that it was a sparing<sup>2</sup> speech of the ancients, to say ' that a friend is another himself ', for that a friend is far more than himself. Men have their time, and die many times in desire of some things which they principally take to heart ; the bestowing of<sup>3</sup> a child, the finishing of a work, or the like. If a man have a true friend, he may rest almost secure that the care of those things will continue after him ; so that a man hath, as it were, two lives in his desires. A man hath a body, and that body is confined to a place ; but where friendship is, all offices of life are, as it were, granted to him and his deputy ; for he may exercise them by his friend. How many things are there which a man cannot, with any face or comeliness, say or do himself ? A man can scarce allege his own merits with modesty, much less extol them ; a man cannot sometimes

<sup>1</sup> Reckon up.

<sup>2</sup> Short of the truth.

<sup>3</sup> Finding a suitable marriage for.

brook to supplicate or beg, and a number of the like : but all these things are graceful in a friend's mouth, which are blushing in a man's own. So, again, a man's person<sup>1</sup> hath many proper<sup>2</sup> relations which he cannot put off. A man cannot speak to his son but as a father ; to his wife but as a husband ; to his enemy but upon terms :<sup>3</sup> whereas a friend may speak as the case requires, and not as it sorteth with<sup>4</sup> the person. But to enumerate these things were endless : I have given the rule, where a man cannot fitly play his own part : if he have not a friend, he may quit the stage.

## 24

## COURAGE

(ARISTOTLE, B. C. 384-322)

*Translated by Chase*

FIRST, then, of Courage. Now that it is a mean<sup>5</sup> state in respect of fear and boldness has been already said : further, the objects of our fears are obviously things fearful or, in a general way of statement, evils ; which accounts for the common definition of fear, viz. ' expectation of evil.'

Of course we fear evils of all kinds : disgrace for instance, poverty, disease, desolateness, death ; but not all these seem to be the object-matter of the Brave man, because there are things which to fear is right and noble and not to fear is base ; disgrace, for example, since he who fears this is a good man and has a sense of honour, and he who does not fear it is shameless (though there are those who call him Brave by analogy because he somewhat resembles the Brave man who agrees with him

<sup>1</sup> The part played by a man.<sup>2</sup> Peculiar to himself.<sup>3</sup> Under a truce.<sup>4</sup> Is suitable to.<sup>5</sup> Middle.

in being free from fear); but poverty, perhaps, or disease, and in fact whatever does not proceed from viciousness nor is attributable to his own fault, a man ought not to fear: still being fearless in respect of these would not constitute a man Brave in the proper sense of the term.

Yet we do apply the term <sup>1</sup> in right of the similarity of the cases: for there are men who, though timid in the dangers of war, are liberal men and are stout enough to face loss of wealth.

And, again, a man is not a coward for fearing insult to his wife or children, or envy, or any such thing; nor is he a Brave man for being bold when going to be scourged.

What kind of fearful things then do constitute the object-matter of the Brave man? First of all, must they not be the greatest, since no man is more apt to withstand what is dreadful? Now the object of the greatest dread is death, because it is the end of all things, and the dead man is thought to be capable neither of good nor evil. Still it would seem that the Brave man has not for his object-matter even death in every circumstance; on the sea, for example, or in sickness. In what circumstances then? Must it not be in the most honourable? Now such is death in war, because it is death in the greatest and most honourable danger: and this is confirmed by the honours awarded in communities and by monarchs.

He then may be most properly denominated Brave who is fearless in respect of honourable death and such sudden emergencies as threaten death; now such specially are those which arise in the course of war.

It is not meant but that the Brave Man will be fearless

<sup>1</sup> 'Moral Courage' is our phrase.



also on the sea (and in sickness), but not in the same way as sea-faring men. For these are lighthearted and hopeful by reason of their experience, while landsmen though Brave are apt to give themselves up for lost and shudder at the notion of such a death : to which it should be added that Courage is exerted in circumstances which admit of doing something to help one's self or in which death would be honourable ; now neither of these conditions attach to destruction by drowning or sickness.

Again, *fearful* is a term of relation, the same thing not being so to all, and there is according to common parlance somewhat so fearful as to be beyond human endurance : this of course would be fearful to every man of sense, but those objects which are level to the capacity of man differ in magnitude and admit of degrees ; so too the objects of confidence or boldness.

Now the Brave man cannot be frightened from his propriety (but of course only so far as he is man) ; fear such things indeed he will, but he will stand up against them as he ought and as right reason may direct, with a view to what is honourable, because this is the End of the virtue.

Now it is possible to fear these things too much or too little, or again to fear what is not really fearful as if it were such. So the errors come to be either that a man fears when he ought not to fear at all, or that he fears in an improper way, or at a wrong time, and so forth : and so too in respect of things inspiring confidence. He is Brave then who withstands, and fears, and is bold, in respect of right objects, from a right motive, in right manner, and at right times : since the Brave man suffers or acts as he ought and as right reason may direct.

Now the End of every separate act of working is that

which accords with the habit, and so to the Brave man Courage, which is honourable ; therefore such is also the End, since the character of each is determined by the End.<sup>1</sup>

So honour is the motive from which the Brave man withstands things fearful and performs the acts which accord with Courage.

Of the characters on the side of Excess, he who exceeds in utter absence of fear has no appropriate name (I observed before that many states have none), but he would be a madman or inaccessible to pain if he feared nothing, neither earthquake nor the billows, as they tell of the Celts.

He again who exceeds in confidence in respect of things fearful is rash. He is thought, moreover, to be a braggart and to advance unfounded claims to the character of Brave : the relation which the Brave man really bears to objects of fear this man wishes to appear to bear and so imitates him in whatever points he can : for this reason most of them exhibit a curious mixture of rashness and cowardice : because, while affecting rashness in these circumstances, they do not withstand what is truly fearful.

The man, moreover, who exceeds in feeling fear is a coward, since there attach to him the circumstances of fearing wrong objects, in wrong ways, and so forth. He is deficient also in feeling confidence, but he is most

<sup>1</sup> The meaning of this passage can scarcely be conveyed except by a paraphrase.

<sup>2</sup> The object of each separate act of working is that which accords with the habit they in the aggregate go to form ; Courage is the habit which separate acts of bravery go to form, therefore the object of these is that which accords with Courage, i. e. Courage itself. But Courage is honourable (which implies that the end and object of it is honour since things are denominated according to their end and object) ; therefore the object of each separate act of bravery is honour.

clearly seen as exceeding in the case of pains ; he is a fainthearted kind of man, for he fears all things : the Brave man is just the contrary, for boldness is the property of the light-hearted and hopeful.

So the coward, the rash, and the Brave man have exactly the same object-matter, but stand differently related to it : the two first-mentioned respectively exceed and are deficient, the last is in a mean state and as he ought to be. The rash again are precipitate, and, being eager before danger, when actually in it fall away, while the Brave are quick and sharp in action, but before are quiet and composed.

Well then, as has been said, Courage is a mean state in respect of objects inspiring boldness or fear, in the circumstances which have been stated, and the Brave man chooses his line and withstands danger either because to do so is honourable, or because not to do so is base. But dying to escape from poverty or the pangs of love or anything that is simply painful, is the act not of a Brave man but a coward : because it is mere softness to fly from what is toilsome, and the suicide braves the terrors of death not because it is honourable, but to get out of the reach of evil.

## 25

## PROCRASTINATION

(ABRAHAM COWLEY, 1618-67)

*A Letter to Mr. S. L.*

I AM glad that you approve and applaud my design, of withdrawing myself from all tumult and business of the world ; and consecrating the little rest of my time to those studies to which nature had so motherly inclined

me, and from which fortune, like a stepmother, has so long detained me. But nevertheless, you say—which *but* is *aerugo mera*, a rust which spoils the good metal it grows upon. But you say, you would advise me not to precipitate that resolution, but to stay a while longer with patience and complaisance, till I had gotten such an estate as might afford me (according to the saying of that person whom you and I love very much, and would believe as soon as another man) *cum dignitate otium*. This were excellent advice to Joshua, who could bid the sun stay too. But there's no fooling with life when it is once turned beyond forty. The seeking for a fortune then is but a desperate after-game: 'tis a hundred to one if a man fling two sixes and recover all; especially if his hand be no luckier than mine.

There is some help for all the defects of fortune; for, if a man cannot attain to the length of his wishes, he may have remedy by cutting of them shorter. Epicurus writes a letter to Idomeneus, who was then a very powerful, wealthy, and, it seems, a bountiful person, to recommend to him, who had made so many rich, one Pythocles, a friend of his, whom he desired might be made a rich man too: 'But I entreat you that you would not do it just the same way as you have done to many less deserving persons, but in the most gentlemanly manner of obliging him, which is not to add anything to his estate, but to take something from his desires.'

The sum of this is, that for the certain hopes of some conveniences we ought not to defer the execution of a work that is necessary, especially when the use of those things which we would stay for may otherwise be supplied, but the loss of time never recovered; nay, farther yet, though we were sure to obtain all that we had a mind to,

though we were sure of getting never so much by continuing the game, yet when the light of life is so near going out, and ought to be so precious, *le jeu ne vaut pas la chandelle* (the play is not worth the expense of the candle): after having been long tossed in a tempest, if our masts be standing, and we have still sail and tackling enough to carry us to our port, it is no matter for the want of streamers and top-gallants:

*utere velis,  
Totos pande sinus.<sup>1</sup>*

A gentleman in our late civil wars, when his quarters were beaten up by the enemy, was taken prisoner, and lost his life afterwards only by staying to put on a band and adjust his periwig; he would escape like a person of quality or not at all, and died the noble martyr of ceremony and gentility. I think your counsel of *Festina lente* is as ill to a man who is flying from the world as it would have been to that unfortunate, well-bred gentleman, who was so cautious as not to fly indecently from his enemies; and therefore I prefer Horace's advice before yours,

*sapere aude,  
Incipe.*

Begin; the getting out of doors is the greatest part of the journey. Varro teaches us that Latin proverb, *portam itineri longissimam esse*: but to return to Horace,

*Sapere aude:  
Incipe; vivendi qui recte prorogat horam,  
Rusticus exspectat, dum defluat amnis: at ille  
Labitur, et labetur in omne volubilis ævum.*

<sup>1</sup> Use your sails, spread all your canvas.

Begin, be bold, and venture to be wise ;  
He who defers this work from day to day  
Does on a river's bank expecting stay,  
Till the whole stream, which stopped him, should be gone,  
That runs, and as it runs, for ever will run on.

Caesar (the man of expedition above all others) was so far from this folly, that whensoever in a journey he was to cross any river, he never went one foot out of his way for a bridge, or a ford, or a ferry, but flung himself into it immediately and swam over, and this is the course we ought to imitate if we meet with any stops in our way to happiness. Stay till the waters are low, stay till some boats come by to transport you, stay till a bridge be built for you : you had even as good stay till the river be quite past. Persius (who, you use to say, you do not know whether he be a good poet or no, because you cannot understand him, and whom therefore, I say, I know to be not a good poet) has an odd expression of these procrastinators which, methinks, is full of fancy :

*Iam cras hesternum consumpsimus ; ecce aliud cras  
Egerit hos annos.*

Our yesterday's to-morrow now is gone,  
And still a new to-morrow does come on ;  
We by to-morrows draw up all our store,  
Till the exhausted well can yield no more.

And now, I think, I am even with you, for your *Otium cum dignitate* and *Festina lente*, and three or four other more of your new Latin sentences : if I should draw upon you all my forces out of Seneca and Plutarch upon this subject I should overwhelm you ; but I leave those, as *Triarii*, for your next charge. I shall only give you now a light skirmish out of an epigrammatist, your special good friend ; and so, *vale*.

## MARTIAL, LIB. V, EPIGR. LIX

To-morrow you will live, you always cry !  
In what far country does this morrow lie  
That 'tis so mighty long ere it arrive ?  
Beyond the Indies does this morrow live ?  
'Tis so far fetch'd this morrow, that I fear  
'Twill be both very old and very dear.  
To-morrow I will live, the fool does say :  
To-day itself 's too late ; the wise liv'd yesterday.

## MARTIAL, LIB. II, EPIGR. XC

Wonder not, Sir, you who instruct the town  
In the true wisdom of the sacred gown,  
That I make haste to live, and cannot hold  
Patiently out till I grow rich and old.  
Life for delays and doubts no time does give,  
None ever yet made haste enough to live.  
Let him defer it whose preposterous care  
Omits himself and reaches to his heir.  
Who does his father's bounded stores despise,  
And whom his own too never can suffice :  
My humble thoughts no glittering roofs require,  
Or rooms that shine with aught but constant fire.  
I well content the avarice of my sight  
With the fair gildings of reflected light :  
Pleasures abroad the sport of nature yields,  
Her living fountains and her smiling fields ;  
And then at home, what pleasure is 't to see  
A little cleanly cheerful family !  
Which if a chaste wife crown, no less in her  
Than fortune, I the golden mean prefer :  
Too noble nor too wise she should not be,  
No, nor too rich, too fair, too fond of me.  
Thus let my life slide silently away,  
With sleep all night and quiet all the day.

## THE DIGNITY OF LABOUR

(THOMAS CARLYLE, 1795-1881)

ALL work is noble ; work is alone noble. There is a perennial nobleness, and even sacredness, in work. Were he never so benighted, forgetful of his high calling, there is always hope in a man that actually and earnestly works : in Idleness alone is there perpetual despair. Work, never so mean, is in communication with Nature ; the real desire to get Work done will itself lead one more and more to truth, to Nature's appointments and regulations, which are truth.

The latest Gospel in this world is, Know thy work and do it. 'Know thyself' : long enough has that poor 'self' of thine tormented thee ; thou wilt never get to 'know' it, I believe ! Think it not thy business, this of knowing thyself ; thou art an unknowable individual : know what thou canst work at ; and work at it like a Hercules ! That will be thy better plan.

It has been written, 'an endless significance lies in Work ;' a man perfects himself by working. Foul jungles are cleared away, fair seedfields rise instead, and stately cities ; and withal the man himself just ceases to be a jungle and foul unwholesome desert thereby. Consider how, even in the meanest sorts of Labour, the whole soul of a man is composed into a kind of real harmony the instant he sets himself to work ! Doubt, Desire, Sorrow, Remorse, Indignation, Despair itself, all these like helldogs lie beleaguering the soul of the poor day-worker, as of every man : but he bends himself with free valour against his task, and all these are stilled,



all these shrink murmuring far off into their caves. The man is now a man. The blessed glow of Labour in him, is it not as purifying fire, wherein all poison is burnt up, and of sour smoke itself there is made bright blessed flames ?

Blessed is he who has found his work ; let him ask no other blessedness. He has a work, a life-purpose ; he has found it, and will follow it ! How, as a free-flowing channel, dug and torn by noble force through the sour mud-swamp of one's existence, like an ever-deepening river there, it runs and flows ;—draining off the sour festering water, gradually from the root of the remotest grass-blade ; making, instead of pestilential swamp, a green fruitful meadow with its clear-flowing stream. How blessed for the meadow itself, let the stream and its value be great or small ! Labour is Life : from the inmost heart of the Worker rises his God-given Force, the sacred celestial Life-essence breathed into him by Almighty God ; from his inmost heart awakens him to all nobleness—to all knowledge, ' self-knowledge,' and much else, so soon as Work fitly begins. Knowledge ? The knowledge that will hold good in working, cleave thou to that. Properly thou hast no other knowledge but what thou hast got by working : the rest is yet all a hypothesis of knowledge ; a thing to be argued of in schools, a thing floating in the clouds, in endless logic-vortices, till we try it and fix it. ' Doubt, of whatever kind, can be ended by Action alone.'

All true Work is sacred ; in all true Work, were it but true hand-labour, there is something of divineness. Labour, wide as the Earth, has its summit in Heaven. Sweat of the brow ; and up from that to sweat of the brain, sweat of the heart ; which includes all Kepler

Calculations, Newton Meditations, all Sciences, all spoken Epics, all acted Heroisms, Martyrdoms—up to that ‘Agony of bloody sweat’, which all men have called divine! O brother, if this is not ‘worship’, then I say, the more pity for worship; for this is the noblest thing yet discovered under God’s sky. Who art thou that complainest of thy life of toil? Complain not. Look up, my wearied brother; see thy fellow workmen there, in God’s Eternity; surviving there, they alone surviving: sacred Band of the Immortals, celestial Bodyguard of the Empire of Mankind.

There is one Liturgy which does remain forever unexceptionable: that of *Praying* (as the old monks did withal) *by Working*. And indeed the Prayer which accomplished itself in special chapels at stated hours, and went not with a man, rising up from all his Work and Action, at all moments sanctifying the same—What was it ever good for? ‘Work is worship:’ yes, in a highly considerable sense—which, in the present state of all ‘worship’, who is there that can unfold? He that understands it well, understands the Prophecy of the whole Future; the last Evangel, which has included all others. *Its Cathedral the Dome of Immensity*—hast thou seen it? Coped with the star-galaxies; paved with the green mosaic of land and ocean; and for altar, verily, the Star-throne of the Eternal! Its litany and psalmody the noble acts, the heroic work and suffering, and true heart-utterance of all the Valiant Sons of Men. Its choir-music the ancient winds and oceans, and deep-toned, inarticulate, but most speaking voices of Destiny and History—supernal ever as of old.

‘Work and despair not.’

## PRACTICE AND HABITS

(JOHN LOCKE, 1632-1704)

WE are born with faculties and powers capable almost of any thing, such at least as would carry us farther than can easily be imagined : but it is only the exercise of those powers which gives us ability and skill in anything, and leads us towards perfection.

A middle-aged ploughman will scarce ever be brought to the carriage and language of a gentleman, though his body be as well proportioned, and his joints as supple, and his natural parts not any way inferior. The legs of a dancing master and the fingers of a musician fall as it were naturally, without thought or pains, into regular and admirable motions. Bid them change their parts, and they will in vain endeavour to produce like motions in the members not used to them, and it will require length of time and long practice to attain but some degrees of a like ability. What incredible and astonishing actions do we find rope dancers and tumblers bring their bodies to ; not but that sundry in almost all manual arts are as wonderful ; but I name those which the world takes notice of for such, because on that very account they give money to see them. All these admired <sup>1</sup> motions beyond the reach, and almost the conception, of unpractised spectators are nothing but the mere effects of use and industry in men, whose bodies have nothing peculiar in them from those of the amazed lookers on.

As it is in the body, so it is in the mind ; practice makes it what it is, and most even of those excellences

<sup>1</sup> Wonderful.

which are looked on as natural endowments will be found, when examined into more narrowly, to be the product of exercise, and to be raised to that pitch only by repeated actions. Some men are remarked for pleasantness in raillery; others for apologues and apposite diverting stories. This is apt to be taken for the effect of pure nature, and that the rather, because it is not got by rules, and those who excel in either of them never purposely set themselves to the study of it as an art to be learnt. But yet it is true that at first some lucky hit, which took with somebody and gained him commendation, encouraged him to try again, inclined his thoughts and endeavours that way, till at last he insensibly got a facility in it without perceiving how; and that is attributed wholly to nature which was much more the effect of use and practice. I do not deny that natural disposition may often give the first rise to it; but that never carries a man far without use and exercise, and it is practice alone that brings the powers of the mind as well as those of the body to their perfection. Many a good poetic vein is buried under a trade, and never produces anything for want of improvement. We see the ways of discourse and reasoning are very different, even concerning the same matter, at court and in the university. And he that will go but from Westminster hall to the Exchange, will find a different genius and turn in their ways of talking, and yet one cannot think that all whose lot fell in the city were born with different parts from those who were bred at the university or inns of court.

To what purpose all this, but to show that the difference, so observable in men's understandings and parts, does not arise so much from their natural faculties as acquired habits. He would be laughed at that should go about to

make a fine dancer out of a country hedger, at past fifty. And he will not have much better success, who shall endeavour at that age to make a man reason well, or speak handsomely, who has never been used to it, though you should lay before him a collection of all the best precepts of logic or oratory. Nobody is made anything by hearing of rules, or laying them up in his memory ; practice must settle the habit of doing without reflecting on the rule, and you may as well hope to make a good painter or musician extempore by a lecture and instruction in the arts of music and painting, as a coherent thinker or strict reasoner by a set of rules, showing him wherein right reasoning consists.

This being so, that defects and weakness in men's understandings, as well as other faculties, come from want of a right use of their own minds, I am apt to think the fault is generally mislaid upon nature, and there is often a complaint of want of parts, when the fault lies in want of a due improvement of them. We see men frequently dexterous and sharp enough in making a bargain, who, if you reason with them about matters of religion, appear perfectly stupid.

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## THE PRESSURE OF GENTLENESS

(D'ARCY THOMPSON, 1829-1902)

A CLOSE relation of my own was for twelve years an officer in almost the severest of all continental services. In that chivalric army is conserved a traditional discipline, whose details would appal a democrat, and the exactions of which could only be endured by an obedient and military race. He tells me that, in his long experience,

he only met with one captain, who in dealing with his company avowedly ignored all means of physical coercion. On this captain's breast were the Orders of two kingdoms and two empires : after one well-fought day he had been voted by acclamation as a candidate for the Order of the Iron Crown, which he would have obtained, had he added his own signature to those of all his brother officers ; and yet so soft-hearted was this *Chevalier sans peur* that any slattern beggar-woman could draw from him an ill-spured florin. In a village, where a portion of the regiment were once quartered, the good curé, at the close of a sermon on Christian Character, told his flock that, if they wished to see Christianity in action, they might see it in a captain of Grenadiers, who clothed their poorest children with his pocket-money, and whose closest companion was ignorant of his good deeds. This captain's company was noted as being the best-dressed and the best-conducted in the regiment. There were at Solferino (and there are, alas ! such cases in all engagements) cases of gallant but stern officers that fell by a traitorous bullet from behind. There was not one man in the company of this captain that would not have taken in his stead a bullet aimed at him from the front.

A year and a half ago I met in Yorkshire an invalid young sailor. From his smooth face, short stature, and attenuated form, I should have taken him for a senior midshipman. To my complete astonishment I found he was commander of a Pacific liner, with a numerous crew under his orders, and in receipt of a splendid income. He had been third in command, when the two seniors had taken fever, and his gallantry under trying circumstances of all kinds had procured his unusually early promotion. I discussed with him the theory of discipline. He con-

sidered physical chastisement as brutal ; swearing as un-Christian ; and hectoring as unmanly. 'The man who cannot control himself is not fit to command a crew,' he said tritely and truly. I looked in wonder at this shrimp of a man, that was speaking with such calm confidence. 'I never', he continued, 'raise my voice above its usual tone to enforce an order.' He was worn to skin and bone by a chest disorder of long continuance, which he considered would close his life at no distant date. I could have pushed him over with a rude jostle of my elbow. But there was something in his face that told you unmistakably he was not the man with whom to take a liberty. He gave me a remarkable anecdote of himself. His ship was alongside of an American liner in the Liverpool docks. The Yankee captain was dining with him, and the conversation fell upon the means of maintaining order in a crew. The Yankee scouted all means but the stick. He and his mates used on principle the most brutal means of coercion. During their argument the steward came to announce that the English crew were fighting the Yankees on the neighbouring vessel. The captains went on deck, and the Englishman, slinging himself by a rope, alighted in the midst of an uproarious crowd. 'Well, my men,' said he, 'so you are making beasts of yourselves, and disgracing your captain.' And the big fellows slunk off without a word to their own vessel, and one or two of the ringleaders were set for an hour or two to swab the decks. But of the quarrelling tars there was not a man but could have lifted his wee captain, and dropped him overboard without an effort. I trust to God he may yet be living, and may long be spared, as a specimen of a quiet, resolute, English, Christian skipper.

My chiefest friend at school was a man of widest mental culture, of even temper, and of sound judgement. Among his friends and my own at Trinity I knew a few men of a similarly high stamp. I remember one man in particular, in whom the scholar and the Christian so curiously blended, that it would be difficult to say where his Latin ended and his religion began. He was a spiritual and mental merman. But if I were called upon to name the Aristides of my life-acquaintance, I should name a man, whom I never knew till I had crossed the Tweed. I believe it would be as hard to warp a Carlyle into sentimental or religious cant, and a prophet-Cumming into common sense and modesty, as to twist the nature of my friend into petty words or illiberal action.

He was once the superintendent of a public educational institution. He had been present one day in the drill-ground, where an honest sergeant with a good deal of superfluous bluster was putting a little regiment through its facings. When the boys were dismissed, the sergeant approached his superior, and said: 'Excuse the liberty, sir, but really, when you are more used to boys, you'll find that you must put more pepper into what you do and say.' 'Well,' said my friend, 'every man has his own way: for my own part, I don't believe in pepper.'

A few weeks afterwards, the principal was in his library, when the sergeant was ushered in. 'I've come, sir,' said the latter, 'to ask a favour. Those boys are a little troublesome at times. If you'd be kind enough just to stand at your drawing-room window for a few minutes when drill was going on, it would do a deal of good; if you'd only stand for a few minutes, reading a newspaper.'

Ah! worthy sergeant; your pepper won't do after



all. No, friend, keep it for your vegetables, and use it then in moderation.

I hold that men may be called of God to more offices than the holy one of the Christian ministry. There was an under-officer at my school, who to me seemed always to partake largely of some of the finest attributes of the gentleman. He had failed through continued ill-health in business as a bookseller, and was a well-read man. He was uniformly civil and respectful to us senior scholars ; but, while we could tip and bribe others, we could never venture on the liberty of an unadorned surname with him. This man was called to the humble office of maintaining order in the school-yard. So there are men called to command men on the field of battle, and boys in the schoolroom. I have met with a schoolmaster in Scotland who could govern a crowd of boys in one room, though they might be divided into scattered groups, and engaged in varied work ; and his only implements of discipline were a word or two of good-natured banter or kindly encouragement, and occasionally a calm and stern rebuke. I have been much struck by the expression of his opinion, that physical coercion cannot be dispensed with altogether. In defiance, however, of a kindness, a sagacity, and a judgement that I respect, I do most firmly believe that the necessity for physical chastisement rests mainly upon two blemishes in our ordinary school system : the mechanical nature of our routine of work ; and the crowding of our class-rooms. In the latter respect we are more at fault than our English brethren ; in the former we are far less sinning. In the teaching of our elementary classes we employ far more spirit, and far less wood ; and I wish I could add, ' no leather.' There is less of a gulf between pupil and master. The severest means of

physical chastisement at the disposal of the latter is almost innocuous. But mild as our implement may be from the point of view of physical pain inflicted, its employment is of necessity associated with some degree of odium, and a more formidable amount of ridicule. I am convinced that many children imagine that we, school-masters, were as naturally born with tawse<sup>1</sup> as foxes with tails. Did you ever see children in a nursery play at school? The rule seems to be for the elder brother to play our part; and that part is limited to the fun or business of flogging all his little sisters.

We have gone a great way already in Scotland in the way of civilized teaching, in forbearing to use an instrument of acute pain and an instrument of indecent brutality. Let us make a farther advance, and if we can invent some intellectual and moral substitute for our ridiculous scourges, let us send the latter in bundles to the public schools of England, to be there adopted when their system is sufficiently ripened by a few extra centuries of Christianity. Let us clothe their scholastic nakedness with the last rags of our barbarism. Our boys will be none the less manly and respectful. Flogging can never instil courage into a child, but it has helped to transform many a one into a sneak. And sneakishness is a vice more hard to eradicate than obduracy. So far from curing an ill-conditioned boy of rude and vulgar ways, it is calculated rather to render inveterate in him a distaste for study, and a stolid hatred of our craft.

Let us be less careful of the mere number of our classes, and more careful of their intellectual culture. Let us care more for what we think of ourselves, than what the public think of us. The respect of others follows close

<sup>1</sup> A whip of leather thongs.

upon self-respect. Let us not care to be called of men,

Rabbi, Rabbi.' Let us be content with classes of limited numbers, every member of which can keep pace with a properly-advancing curriculum. Let us aim at a broad and invigorating culture, not a narrow and pedantic one ; let us ignore examinations of College or Civil Service, and aim only at the great and searching examination of actual life. Let our aims be high and generous, irrespective of the exactions of unreasoning parents and well-meaning but unqualified intermeddlers ; let our means of coercion be dignified, in spite of the trials to which our tempers may be exposed. Let us endeavour to make our pupils love their work without fearing us. They may live—God knows—to love *us*. Whether they ever love us or not perhaps matters but little, if we do our work single-heartedly. The *mens conscia recti* is of itself no mean reward. I am, perhaps, an enthusiast ; but I have an idea that, ere a generation is passed away, the last sound of the last tawse will be heard in the leading grammar-schools of Scotland. Her scholars will be none the worse taught, and her schoolmasters none the less respected, when instruction has been made less rugged in her aspect, and discipline is maintained by the more than hydraulic pressure of a persistent and continuous gentleness.

And, O brother schoolmaster, remember evermore the exceeding dignity of our calling. It is not the holiest of all callings ; but it runs near and parallel to the holiest. The lawyer's wits are sharpened, and his moral sense not seldom blunted, by a lifelong familiarity with ignorance, chicanery, and crime. The physician, in the exercise of a more beneficent craft, is saddened continually by the spectacle of human weakness and human pain. We have usually to deal with fresh and unpolluted natures.

A noble calling, but a perilous. We are dressers in a moral and mental vineyard. We are under-shepherds of the Lord's little ones ; and our business is to lead them into green pastures, by the sides of refreshing streams. Let us into our linguistic lessons introduce cunningly and imperceptibly all kinds of amusing stories ; stories of the real kings of earth, that have reigned in secret, crownless and unseptr'd ; leaving the vain show of power to gilded toy-kings and make-believe statesmen ; of the angels that have walked the earth in the guise of holy men and holier women ; of the seraph singers, whose music will be echoing for ever ; of the cherubim of power, that with the mighty wind of conviction and enthusiasm have winnowed the air of pestilence and superstition.

Yes, Friend, throw a higher poetry than all this into your linguistic work ; the poetry of pure and holy motive. Then, in the coming days, when you are fast asleep under the green grass, they will not speak lightly of you over their fruit and wine, mimicking your accent, and retailing dull, insipid boy-pleasantries. Enlightened by the experience of fatherhood, they will see with a clear remembrance your firmness in dealing with their moral faults, your patience in dealing with their intellectual weakness. And, calling to mind the old schoolroom, they will think : ' Ah ! it was good for us to be there. For, unknown to us, were made therein three tabernacles, one for us, and one for our schoolmaster, and one for Him that is the Friend of all children and the Master of all schoolmasters.'

Ah ! believe me, brother mine, where two or three children are met together, unless He, who is the Spirit of gentleness, be in the midst of them, then our Latin is but sounding brass, and our Greek a tinkling cymbal.

## THE IMPATIENCE OF MODERN LIFE

(FROM *The Times*)

WONDER has recently been expressed, in an article in *The Times* upon the revival of embroidery, that the revival of such an art should be even attempted in our hasty and impatient age, in view of the undivided attention, the religious inspiration, and the patience impatient of all but perfection, which were necessary for the production of the great masterpieces of English embroidery such as the Syon Cope. To us nowadays embroidery is either an elegant amusement or a purely commercial labour, and whatever efforts are made to restore its ancient status as a serious art are hampered by the indifference of the public, which does not believe that the minor arts, as they are called, can be worthy of serious attention, and is not ready to pay an adequate price for the time and skill that must be spent upon them if they are to be seriously practised. It is not any natural incapacity that has demoralized all those minor arts, but a refusal to make the sacrifices necessary to excellence in them ; and for this refusal there are many causes. More than a hundred years ago Wordsworth said :

The world is too much with us ; late and soon,  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers.

But how quiet and secluded was the life of most men then compared with our life now ! It was easy for Wordsworth to live out of the world and to pay no heed to its demands ; but now its roar can be heard even in his solitudes, and there are few who do not wish to hear

it. Even in his time England contained a number of little societies isolated from each other ; now it is one huge society which lacks in concentration what it has gained in diffusion. For with all our labour-saving machinery we have found no means of increasing mental energy. We have given our minds far more to do, but they have only the same power as the minds of our forefathers, and the consequence is that we do more things, but attain more rarely to excellence.

This is not altogether a loss. In the article from which we have quoted reference is made to the days when a woman's chief solace from ennui lay in the study of a new stitch, in the designing of a new pattern, or in the mere completion of an elaborate embroidery. That, no doubt, was solace enough for those who were by nature artists ; but ennui in the Middle Ages must have lain very heavy upon the many who had no great energy of mind, and who could not in their leisure hours make tasks for themselves and enjoy them. Nowadays the world is always with such people in many different forms. They have newspapers ; they have magazines and cheap books ; they can take a lazy interest in every passing event of politics, in the Chinese Revolution, or in the lectures of M. Bergson. In the past they would have heard of matters such as these either not at all or dimly and at long intervals. Now it is easy to be contemptuous of a lazy interest in anything ; but the great mass of people who earn their living in one way or another have energy only for lazy interests in their leisure, and for them the world nowadays provides a good deal of vague amusement, which it did not provide even in Wordsworth's time, and still less in the Middle Ages. We sacrifice excellence to mediocrity ; but in the past

mediocrity was usually sacrificed to excellence. We see all the excellence that has survived, and wonder at it as if it were the work of a giant race before the Flood ; but the past tells us nothing of its mediocrities and the ennui and bitterness of little minds which had nothing to draw them out of themselves and their own petty concerns. The gossip of little villages may not become more valuable when it is turned into a kind of world gossip, but at least it is more various and less ill-natured ; and those who hear the roar of the world, however confusedly, must pay less attention to the furtive whispers of their neighbours.

Still there is no doubt that the world is too much with us, and that we do lay waste our powers, especially the powers of the rarest minds. Patience is one of the most unworldly virtues, and because of our incessant commerce with the world we have almost lost it. We want quick returns for all that we do, either in money or in praise, and we find it very difficult to do anything well simply for its own sake. The greatest mischief of worldliness is that it destroys all absolute standards ; it makes people value everything in terms of something else, so that they are never clear in their own minds why they value anything. Any one now, before devoting a great part of his life to the pursuit of excellence in a minor art, would be sure to ask himself what was the good of it. And probably he would not find an answer because, being accustomed to value everything in terms of something else, he would not know what was the good of anything. A nun in the Middle Ages would have said that she practised embroidery, as Michelangelo said that he painted, for the glory of God. That was an absolute reason for all her labours, which could not be

analysed in terms of anything else ; and, having this absolute reason, she could devote her life to her embroidery and get a quiet happiness from it, and perhaps produce a masterpiece. And in her secluded world there was no one to question her reason ; she was subject to no new or changing influences. It was taken for granted that she was a holy woman who embroidered for the glory of God, and that she could not do better. But every one now hears the world asking new questions about everything and never answering them. And, because it is so much with us, our minds are unsettled by its vastness and variety and continually shifting interests. We are apt to go through life like children at a fair, seeing many things and soon forgetting them ; passively undergoing many experiences, rather than doing any work that is likely to last. Our age is wonderfully fertile in ingenious novelties, but compared with the patient works of the past they are what fleeting thoughts are to masterpieces of literature. We find our own time interesting enough, as men find their own thoughts interesting ; but what shall we leave that the future will listen to or look at ?

## 30

## OF EMPIRE

(FRANCIS BACON, 1561-1626)

It is a miserable state of mind to have few things to desire, and many things to fear ; and yet that commonly is the case with kings, who being at the highest, want matter of desire, which makes their minds more languishing, and have many representations of perils and shadows, which make their minds the less clear : and this is one



reason also of that effect which the Scripture speaketh of, 'That the king's heart is inscrutable'; for multitude of jealousies, and lack of some predominant desire, that should marshal and put in order all the rest, maketh any man's heart hard to find or sound<sup>1</sup>. Hence it comes likewise, that princes many times make themselves desires, and set their heart upon toys; sometimes upon a building; sometimes upon erecting of an Order; sometimes upon the advancing of a person; sometimes upon obtaining excellency in some art, or feat of the hand—as Nero for playing on the harp; Domitian for certainty of the hand with the arrow; Commodus for playing at fence; Caracalla for driving chariots; and the like. This seemeth incredible unto those that know not the principle, that the mind of Man is more cheered and refreshed by profiting<sup>2</sup> in small things, than by standing at a stay in great. We see also that kings that have been fortunate conquerors in their first years, it being not possible for them to go forward infinitely, but that they must have some check or arrest in their fortunes, turn in their latter years to be superstitious and melancholy; as did Alexander the Great, Diocletian, and in our memory Charles V, and others; for he that is used to go forward, and findeth a stop, falleth out of his own favour, and is not the thing he was.

To speak now of the true temper of empire,<sup>3</sup> it is a thing rare and hard to keep, for both temper and distemper consist of contraries; but it is one thing to mingle contraries, another to interchange them. The answer of Apollonius to Vespasian is full of excellent instruction. Vespasian asked him, 'What was Nero's

<sup>1</sup> Fathom.

<sup>3</sup> Mixture of qualities needed by a ruler.

<sup>2</sup> Progressing.

overthrow ? ' He answered, ' Nero could touch and tune the harp well, but in government sometimes he used to wind the pins too high, sometimes to let them down too low ' ; and certain it is, that nothing destroyeth authority so much as the unequal and untimely interchange of power pressed too far, and relaxed too much.

This is true, that the wisdom of all these latter times in princes' affairs, is rather fine deliveries<sup>1</sup>, and shiftings of dangers and mischiefs when they are near, than solid and grounded courses<sup>2</sup> to keep them aloof ; but this is but to try masteries with fortune ; and let men beware how they neglect and suffer matter of trouble to be prepared ; for no man can forbid the spark, nor tell whence it may come. The difficulties in princes' business are many and great, but the greatest difficulty is often in their own mind ; for it is common with princes (saith Tacitus) to will contradictories : ' Sunt plerumque regum voluntates vehementes, et inter se contrariae.' For it is the solecism<sup>3</sup> of power to think to command the end, and yet not to endure the mean.

Kings have to deal with their neighbours, their wives, their children, their prelates or clergy, their nobles, their second nobles or gentlemen, their merchants, their commons, and their men of war ; and from all these arise dangers, if care and circumspection be not used.

First, for their neighbours, there can no general rule be given (the occasions are so variable), save one which ever holdeth—which is, that princes do keep due sentinel, that none of their neighbours do overgrow so (by increase of territory, by embracing of trade, by approaches<sup>4</sup>, or the like) as they become more able to annoy them than

<sup>1</sup> Skilful escapes from difficulties.

<sup>2</sup> Methods based on principle.

<sup>3</sup> Error.

<sup>4</sup> Encroachments.

they were ; and this is generally the work of standing councils to foresee and to hinder it. During that triumvirate of kings, King Henry VIII of England, Francis I, king of France, and Charles V, emperor, there was such a watch kept that none of the three could win a palm of ground, but the other two would straightways balance it, either by confederation, or, if need were, by a war, and would not in any wise take up peace at interest<sup>1</sup> ; and the like was done by that league (which Guicciardini saith was the security of Italy), made between Ferdinando, king of Naples, Lorenzious Medices, and Ludovicus Sforza, potentates, the one of Florence, the other of Milan. Neither is the opinion of some of the schoolmen to be received, that a war cannot justly be made, but upon a precedent injury or provocation ; for there is no question but a just fear of an imminent danger, though there be no blow given, is a lawful cause of war.

For their wives, there are cruel examples of them. Livia is infamed<sup>2</sup> for the poisoning of her husband ; Roxolana, Solyman's wife, was the destruction of that renowned prince, Sultan Mustapha, and otherwise troubled his house and succession ; Edward II of England's queen had the principal hand in the deposing and murder of her husband. This kind of danger is then to be feared chiefly when the wives have plots for the raising of their own children, or else that they be advoutresses<sup>3</sup>.

For their children, the tragedies likewise of dangers from them have been many ; and generally the entering of the fathers into suspicion of their children hath been ever unfortunate. The destruction of Mustapha (that we named before) was so fatal to Solyman's line, as the

<sup>1</sup> Which would have to be paid for.

<sup>2</sup> Infamous.

<sup>3</sup> Adulteresses.

succession of the Turks from Solyman until this day is suspected to be untrue, and of strange blood, for that Selymus II was thought to be supposititious<sup>1</sup>. The destruction of Crispus, a young prince of rare towardness<sup>2</sup>, by Constantinus the Great, his father, was in like manner fatal to his house, for both Constantinus and Constance, his sons, died violent deaths ; and Constantius, his other son, did little better, who died indeed of sickness, but after that Julianus had taken arms against him. The destruction of Demetrius, son to Philip II of Macedon, turned upon the father, who died of repentance : and many like examples there are, but few or none where the fathers had good by such distrust, except it were where the sons were in open arms against them, as was Selymus I against Bajazet, and the three sons of Henry II, king of England.

For their prelates, when they are proud and great, there is also danger from them ; as it was in the times of Anselmus and Thomas Becket, archbishops of Canterbury, who, with their crosiers, did almost try it with the king's sword ; and yet they had to deal with stout and haughty kings—William Rufus, Henry I, and Henry II. The danger is not from that estate<sup>3</sup>, but where it hath a dependence of foreign authority, or where the churchmen come in and are elected, not by the collation<sup>4</sup> of the king, or particular patrons, but by the people.

For their nobles, to keep them at a distance, it is not amiss ; but to depress them may make a king more absolute, but less safe, and less able to perform anything that he desires. I have noted it in my history of King

<sup>1</sup> Substituted, a changeling.

<sup>3</sup> Order of men (the clergy).

<sup>2</sup> Readiness to learn.

<sup>4</sup> Presentation.

Henry VII of England, who depressed his nobility, whereupon it came to pass, that his times were full of difficulties and troubles ; for the nobility, though they continued loyal unto him, yet did they not co-operate with him in his business—so that in effect he was fain to do all things himself.

For their second nobles, there is not much danger from them, being a body dispersed : they may sometimes discourse high, but that doth little hurt ; besides, they are a counterpoise to the higher nobility, that they grow not too potent ; and, lastly, being the most immediate<sup>1</sup> in authority with the common people, they do best temper popular commotions.

For their merchants, they are *vena porta*<sup>2</sup>, and if they flourish not, a kingdom may have good limbs, but will have empty veins, and nourish<sup>3</sup> little. Taxes and imposts upon them do seldom good to the king's revenue, for that which he wins in the hundred he loseth in the shire : the particular rates being increased, but the total bulk of trading rather decreased.

For their commons, there is little danger from them, except it be where they have great and potent heads, or where you meddle with the point of religion, or their customs, or means of life.

For their men of war, it is a dangerous state where they live and remain in a body, and are used to donatives, whereof we see examples in the Janizaries and pretorian bands of Rome ; but trainings of men, and arming them in several places, and under several commanders, and without donatives, are things of defence, and no danger.

<sup>1</sup> Closely connected.

<sup>2</sup> The portal (or gate) vein which carries nourishment to the liver by the blood.

<sup>3</sup> Be nourished.

Princes are like to heavenly bodies, which cause good or evil times ; and which have much veneration, but no rest. All precepts concerning kings are in effect comprehended in those two remembrances : ' Memento quod es homo ', and ' Memento quod es Deus ', or ' vice Dei ' —the one bridled their power, and the other their will.

## 31

## OF GREATNESS

(ABRAHAM COWLEY, 1618-67)

SINCE we cannot attain to greatness, says the *Sieur de Montaigne*, let us have our revenge by railing at it : this he spoke but in jest. I believe he desired it no more than I do, and had less reason, for he enjoyed so plentiful and honourable a fortune in a most excellent country, as allowed him all the real conveniences of it, separated and purged from the inconveniences. If I were but in his condition, I should think it hard measure, without being convinced <sup>1</sup> of any crime, to be sequestered from it and made one of the principal officers of state. But the reader may think that what I now say is of small authority, because I never was, nor ever shall be, put to the trial ; I can therefore only make my protestation.

If ever I more riches did desire  
Than cleanliness and quiet do require ;  
If e'er ambition did my fancy cheat,  
With any wish so mean as to be great,  
Continue, Heaven, still from me to remove  
The humble blessings of that life I love.

I know very many men will despise, and some pity me, for this humour, as a poor-spirited fellow ; but

<sup>1</sup> Convicted.

I am content, and, like Horace, thank God for being so. *Dii bene fecerunt inopis me quodque pusilli Finxerunt animi.* I confess I love littleness almost in all things. A little convenient estate, a little cheerful house, a little company, and a very little feast; and if I were ever to fall in love again (which is a great passion, and therefore I hope I have done with it) it would be, I think, with prettiness rather than with majestical beauty. I would neither wish that my mistress, nor my fortune, should be a *bona roba*<sup>1</sup>, nor, as Homer used to describe his beauties, like a daughter of great Jupiter, for the stateliness and largeness of her person, but, as Lucretius says, *Parvula, pumilio, Χαλκρον μίλα, tota merum sal.*<sup>2</sup>

Where there is one man of this, I believe there are a thousand of Senecio's mind, whose ridiculous affectation of grandeur Seneca the elder describes to this effect. Senecio was a man of a turbid and confused wit, who could not endure to speak any but mighty words and sentences, till this humour grew at last into so notorious a habit, or rather disease, as became the sport of the whole town: he would have no servants but huge massy fellows, no plate or household stuff but thrice as big as the fashion; you may believe me, for I speak it without raillery, his extravagancy came at last into such a madness that he would not put on a pair of shoes each of which was not big enough for both his feet; he would eat nothing but what was great, nor touch any fruit but horse-plums<sup>3</sup> and pound-pears. He kept a concubine that was a very giantess, and made her walk, too, always in *chiopins*,<sup>4</sup> till at last he got the surname of *Senecio*

<sup>1</sup> Finely dressed woman.

<sup>2</sup> 'A tiny woman, a dwarf, one of the Graces, pure wit from top to toe.'

<sup>3</sup> Large plums.

<sup>4</sup> Shoes with thick cork soles.

*Grandio*, which, Messala said, was not his cognomen, but his cognomentum. When he declaimed for the three hundred Lacedaemonians, who also opposed Xerxes' army of above three hundred thousand, he stretched out his arms and stood on tiptoes, that he might appear the taller, and cried out in a very loud voice, 'I rejoice, I rejoice!' We wondered, I remember, what new great fortune had befallen his eminence. 'Xerxes', says he, 'is all mine own. He who took away the sight of the sea with the canvas veils of so many ships . . .' and then he goes on so, as I know not what to make of the rest, whether it be the fault of the edition, or the orator's own burly way of nonsense.

This is the character that Seneca gives of this hyperbolical fop<sup>1</sup>, whom we stand amazed at, and yet there are very few men who are not, in some things, and to some degree, *grandios*. Is anything more common than to see our ladies of quality wear such high shoes as they cannot walk in without one to lead them? and a gown as long again as their body, so that they cannot stir to the next room without a page or two to hold it up? I may safely say that all the ostentation of our grandees is just like a train, of no use in the world, but horribly cumbersome and inconvenient. What is all this but spice of *grandio*? How tedious would this be if we were always bound to it! I do believe there is no king who would not rather be deposed than endure every day of his reign all the ceremonies of his coronation. The mightiest princes are glad to fly often from these majestic pleasures (which is, methinks, no small disparagement to them), as it were for refuge, to the most contemptible divertisements and meanest recreations of the vulgar,

<sup>1</sup> Excessively conceited man.



may, even of children. One of the most powerful and fortunate princes of the world of late could find out no delight so satisfactory as the keeping of little singing-birds, and hearing of them and whistling to them. What did the emperors of the whole world? If ever any men had the free and full enjoyment of all human greatness (nay, that would not suffice, for they would be gods too) they certainly possessed it; and yet one of them, who styled himself 'Lord and God of the Earth', could not tell how to pass his whole day pleasantly, without spending constant<sup>1</sup> two or three hours in catching of flies, and killing them with a bodkin, as if his godship had been Beelzebub. One of his predecessors, Nero (who never put any bounds, nor met with any stop to his appetite), could divert himself with no pastime more agreeable than to run about the streets all night in a disguise, and abuse the women and affront the men whom he met, and sometimes to beat them, and sometimes to be beaten by them. This was one of his imperial nocturnal pleasures; his chiefest in the day was to sing and play upon a fiddle, in the habit of a minstrel, upon the public stage; he was prouder of the garlands that were given to his divine voice (as they called it then) in those kind of prizes, than all his forefathers were of their triumphs over nations. He did not at his death complain that so mighty an emperor, and the last of all the Caesarian race of deities, should be brought to so shameful and miserable an end, but only cried out, 'Alas! what pity it is that so excellent a musician should perish in this manner!' His uncle Claudius spent half his time at playing at dice; that was the main fruit of his sovereignty. I omit the mad-nesses of Caligula's delights, and the execrable sordidness

<sup>1</sup> Without ceasing.

of those of Tiberius. Would one think that Augustus himself, the highest and most fortunate of mankind, a person endowed too with many excellent parts of nature, should be so hard put to it sometimes for want of recreations, as to be found playing at nuts and bounding-stones<sup>1</sup> with little Syrian and Moorish boys, whose company he took delight in for their prating and their wantonness?

Was it for this that Rome's best blood he spilt,  
With so much falsehood, so much guilt?  
Was it for this that his ambition strove  
To equal Caesar first, and after Jove?  
Greatness is barren sure of solid joys;  
Her merchandise, I fear, is all in toys;  
She could not else sure so uncivil be,  
To treat his universal majesty,  
His new created Deity,  
With nuts and bounding-stones and boys.

But we must excuse her for this meagre entertainment; she has not really wherewithal to make such feasts as we imagine; her guests must be contented sometimes with but slender cates<sup>2</sup>, and with the same cold meats served over and over again, even till they become nauseous. When you have pared away all the vanity, what solid and natural contentment does there remain which may not be had with five hundred pounds a year? Not so many servants or horses, but a few good ones, which will do all the business as well; not so many choice dishes at every meal, but at several<sup>3</sup> meals all of them, which makes them both the more healthy and the more pleasant; not so rich garments nor so frequent changes, but as warm and as comely, and so frequent change, too, as is every jot as good

<sup>1</sup> Marbles.

<sup>2</sup> Provisions.

<sup>3</sup> Separate.

for the master, though not for the tailor or valet-de-chambre ; not such a stately palace, nor gilt rooms, nor the costlier sorts of tapestry, but a convenient brick house, with decent wainscot and pretty forest-work hangings<sup>1</sup>. Lastly (for I omit all other particulars, and will end with that which I love most in both conditions), not whole woods cut in walks, nor vast parks, nor fountain or cascade gardens, but herb and flower and fruit gardens, which are more useful, and the water every whit as clear and wholesome as if it darted from the breasts of a marble nymph or the urn of a river-god. If for all this you like better the substance of that former estate of life, do but consider the inseparable accidents of both : servitude, disquiet, danger, and most commonly guilt, inherent in the one ; in the other, liberty, tranquillity, security, and innocence : and when you have thought upon this, you will confess that to be a truth which appeared to you before but a ridiculous paradox, that a low fortune is better guarded and attended than a high one. If, indeed, we look only upon the flourishing head of the tree, it appears a most beautiful object.

*Quae quantum vertice ad auras  
Aetherias, tantum radice in Tartara tendit.*

As far up towards heaven the branches grow,  
So far the root sinks down to hell below.

Another horrible disgrace to greatness is, that it is for the most part in pitiful want and distress. What a wonderful thing is this, unless it degenerate into avarice, and so cease to be greatness. It falls perpetually into such necessities as drive it into all the meanest and most sordid ways of borrowing, cozenage, and robbery, *Man-*

<sup>1</sup> Curtains with tree patterns.

*cipii locuples, eget aeris Cappadocum Rex.* This is the case of almost all great men, as well as of the poor king of Cappadocia. They abound with slaves, but are indigent of money. The ancient Roman emperors, who had the riches of the whole world for their revenue, had wherewithal to live, one would have thought, pretty well at ease, and to have been exempt from the pressures of extreme poverty. But yet with most of them it was much otherwise, and they fell perpetually into such miserable penury, that they were forced to devour or squeeze most of their friends and servants, to cheat with infamous projects, to ransack and pillage all their provinces. This fashion of imperial grandeur is imitated by all inferior and subordinate sorts of it, as if it were a point of honour. They must be cheated of a third part of their estates, two other thirds they must expend in vanity, so that they remain debtors for all the necessary provisions of life, and have no way to satisfy those debts but out of the succours and supplies of rapine ; 'as riches increase,' says Solomon, 'so do the mouths that devour it.' The master mouth has no more than before ; the owner, methinks, is like Ocnus in the fable, who is perpetually winding a rope of hay and an ass at the end perpetually eating it. Out of these inconveniences arises naturally one more, which is, that no greatness can be satisfied or contented with itself : still, if it could mount up a little higher, it would be happy ; if it could but gain that point, it would obtain all its desires ; but yet at last, when it is got up to the very top of the peak of Teneriffe, it is in very great danger of breaking its neck downwards, but in no possibility of ascending upwards into the seat of tranquillity above the moon. The first ambitious men in the world, the old giants, are

said to have made an heroical attempt of scaling Heaven in despite of the gods, and they cast Ossa upon Olympus and Pelion upon Ossa, two or three mountains more they thought would have done their business, but the thunder spoiled all the work when they were come up to the third story ;

And what a noble plot was crossed,  
And what a brave design was lost.

A famous person of their offspring, the late giant of our nation,<sup>1</sup> when, from the condition of a very considerable captain, he had made himself lieutenant-general of an army of little Titans, which was his first mountain ; and afterwards general, which was his second ; and after that absolute tyrant of three kingdoms, which was the third, and almost touched the heaven which he affected ; is believed to have died with grief and discontent because he could not attain to the honest name of a king, and the old formality of a crown, though he had before exceeded the power by a wicked usurpation. If he could have compassed that, he would perhaps have wanted something else that is necessary to felicity, and pined away for the want of the title of an emperor or a god. The reason of this is, that greatness has no reality in nature, but is a creature of the fancy—a notion that consists only in relation and comparison. It is indeed an idol ; but St. Paul teaches us that an idol is nothing in the world. There is in truth no rising or meridian of the sun, but only in respect to several places : there is no right or left, no upper hand in nature ; everything is little and everything is great according as it is diversely compared. There may be perhaps some villages in Scotland or Ireland where I might be a great man ; and in

<sup>1</sup> Oliver Cromwell.

that case I should be like Caesar—you would wonder how Caesar and I should be like one another in anything—and choose rather to be the first man of the village than second at Rome. Our country is called Great Britain, in regard only of a lesser of the same name<sup>1</sup>; it would be but a ridiculous epithet for it when we consider it together with the kingdom of China. That, too, is but a pitiful rood of ground in comparison of the whole earth besides; and this whole globe of earth, which we account so immense a body, is but one point or atom in relation to those numberless worlds that are scattered up and down in the infinite space of the sky which we behold.

## 32

## OF THE ORIGIN OF GOVERNMENT

(DAVID HUME, 1711-76)

MAN, born in a family, is compelled to maintain society, from necessity, from natural inclination, and from habit. The same creature, in his farther progress, is engaged to established political society, in order to administer justice; without which there can be no peace among them, nor safety, nor mutual intercourse. We are, therefore, to look upon all the vast apparatus of our government, as having ultimately no other object or purpose but the distribution of justice, or, in other words, the support of the twelve judges. Kings and parliaments, fleets and armies, officers of the court, and revenue ambassadors, ministers, and privy-counsellors, are all subordinate in their end to this part of administration. Even the clergy, as their duty leads them to

<sup>1</sup> Brittany.

inculcate morality, may justly be thought, so far as regards this world, to have no other useful object of their institution.

All men are sensible of the necessity of justice to maintain peace and order ; and all men are sensible of the necessity of peace and order for the maintenance of society. Yet, notwithstanding this strong and obvious necessity, such is the frailty or perverseness of our nature ! it is impossible to keep men, faithfully and unerringly, in the paths of justice. Some extraordinary circumstance may happen, in which a man finds his interests to be more promoted by fraud or rapine, than hurt by the breach which his injustice makes in the social union. But much more frequently he is seduced from his great and important, but distant interests, by the allurements of present, though often very frivolous temptations. This great weakness is incurable in human nature.

Men must, therefore, endeavour to palliate what they cannot cure. They must institute some persons under the appellation of magistrates, whose peculiar office it is to point out the decrees of equity, to punish transgressors, to correct fraud and violence, and to oblige men, however reluctant, to consult their own real and permanent interests. In a word, Obedience is a new duty which must be invented to support that of justice ; and the ties of equity must be corroborated by those of allegiance to society.

But still, viewing matters in an abstract light, it may be thought that nothing is gained by this alliance, and that the factitious duty of obedience, from its very nature, has as feeble a hold of the human mind as the primitive and natural duty of justice. Peculiar interests and present temptations may overcome the one as well as

the other. They are equally exposed to the same inconvenience. And the man who is inclined to be a bad neighbour must be led by the same motives, well or ill understood, to be a bad citizen and subject. Not to mention that the magistrate himself may often be negligent, or partial, or unjust in his administration.

Experience, however, proves that there is a great difference between the cases. Order in society, we find, is much better maintained by means of government ; and our duty to the magistrate is more strictly guarded by the principles of human nature than our duty to our fellow citizens. The love of dominion is so strong in the breast of man, that many not only submit to, but court all the dangers, and fatigues, and cares of government ; and men, once raised to that station, though often led astray by private passions, find, in ordinary cases, a visible interest in the impartial administration of justice. The persons who first attain this distinction by the consent, tacit or express, of the people, must be endowed with superior personal qualities of valour, force, integrity, or prudence, which command respect and confidence : and, after government is established, a regard to birth, rank, and station has a mighty influence over men, and enforces the decrees of the magistrate. The prince or leader exclaims against every disorder which disturbs his society. He summons all his partisans and all men of probity to aid him in correcting and redressing it ; and he is readily followed by all indifferent persons in the execution of his office. He soon acquires the power of rewarding these services ; and in the progress of society, he establishes subordinate ministers and often a military force, who find an immediate and a visible interest in supporting his authority. Habit soon consolidates what other



principles of human nature had imperfectly founded ; and men, once accustomed to obedience, never think of departing from that path, in which they and their ancestors have constantly trod, and to which they are confined by so many urgent and visible motives.

But though this progress of human affairs may appear certain and inevitable, and though the support which allegiance brings to justice be founded on obvious principles of human nature, it cannot be expected that men should beforehand be able to discover them, or foresee their operation. Government commences more casually and more imperfectly. It is probable that the first ascendant of one man over multitudes began during a state of war, where the superiority of courage and of genius discovers itself most visibly, where unanimity and concert are most requisite, and where the pernicious effects of disorder are most sensibly felt. The long continuance of that state, an incident common among savage tribes, inured the people to submission ; and if the chieftain possessed as much equity as prudence and valour, he became, even during peace, the arbiter of all differences, and could gradually, by a mixture of force and consent, establish his authority. The benefit sensibly felt from his influence made it be cherished by the people, at least by the peaceable and well-disposed among them ; and if his son enjoyed the same good qualities, government advanced the sooner to maturity and perfection ; but was still in a feeble state, till the farther progress of improvement procured the magistrate a revenue, and enabled him to bestow rewards on the several instruments of his administration, and to inflict punishments on the refractory and disobedient. Before that period, each exertion of his influence must have been particular, and

founded on the peculiar circumstances of the case. After it, submission was no longer a matter of choice in the bulk of the community, but was rigorously exacted by the authority of the supreme magistrate.

In all governments there is a perpetual intestine struggle, open or secret, between Authority and Liberty ; and neither of them can ever absolutely prevail in the contest. A great sacrifice of liberty must necessarily be made in every government ; yet even the authority, which confines liberty, can never, and perhaps ought never, in any constitution, to become quite entire and uncontrolable. The sultan is master of the life and fortune of any individual, but will not be permitted to impose new taxes on his subjects : a French monarch can impose taxes at pleasure, but would find it dangerous to attempt the lives and fortunes of individuals. Religion also, in most countries, is commonly found to be a very intractable principle ; and other principles or prejudices frequently resist all the authority of the civil magistrate ; whose power, being founded on opinion, can never subvert other opinions, equally rooted with that of his title to dominion. The government, which, in common appellation, receives the appellation of free, is that which admits of a partition of power among several members, whose united authority is no less, or is commonly greater, than that of any monarch ; but who, in the usual course of administration, must act by general and equal laws, that are previously known to all the members, and to all their subjects. In this sense it must be owned that liberty is the perfection of civil society ; but still authority must be acknowledged essential to its very existence ; and in those contests, which so often take place between the one and the other, the latter may, on that account, challenge the preference.

Unless perhaps one may say (and it may be said with some reason) that a circumstance, which is essential to the existence of civil society, must always support itself, and needs be guarded with less jealousy than one that contributes only to its perfection, which the indolence of men is so apt to neglect, or their ignorance to overlook.

## 33

## OF THE LIBERTY OF THE PRESS

(DAVID HUME)

NOTHING is more apt to surprise a foreigner than the extreme liberty which we enjoy in this country, of communicating whatever we please to the public, and of openly censuring every measure entered into by the King or his ministers. If the administration resolve upon war, it is affirmed that, either wilfully or ignorantly, they mistake the interests of the nation; and that peace, in the present situation of affairs, is infinitely preferable. If the passion of the ministers lie towards peace, our political writers breathe nothing but war and devastation, and represent the pacific conduct of the government as mean and pusillanimous. As this liberty is not indulged in any other government, either republican or monarchical; in Holland and Venice, more than in France or Spain; it may very naturally give occasion to the question, *How it happens that Great Britain alone enjoys this peculiar privilege?*

The reason why the laws indulge us in such a liberty seems to be derived from our mixed form of government, which is neither wholly monarchical nor wholly republican. It will be found, if I mistake not, a true observation

in politics, that the two extremes in government, liberty and slavery, commonly approach nearest to each other ; and that, as you depart from the extremes, and mix a little of monarchy with liberty, the government becomes always the more free ; and, on the other hand, when you mix a little of liberty with monarchy, the yoke becomes always the more grievous and intolerable. In a government such as that of France, which is absolute, and where law, custom, and religion concur, all of them, to make the people fully satisfied with their condition, the monarch cannot entertain any *jealousy* against his subjects, and therefore is apt to indulge them in great *liberties* both of speech and action. In a government altogether republican, such as that of Holland, where there is no magistrate so eminent as to give *jealousy* to the state, there is no danger in entrusting the magistrates with large discretionary powers ; and though many advantages result from such powers, in preserving peace and order, yet they lay a considerable restraint on men's actions, and make every private citizen pay a great respect to the government. Thus it seems evident that the two extremes of absolute monarchy and of a republic approach near to each other in some material circumstances. 1. The magistrate has no jealousy of the people. 2. The people have none of the magistrate : which want of jealousy begets a mutual confidence and trust in both cases, and produces a species of liberty in monarchies, and of arbitrary power in republics.

To justify the other part of the foregoing observation, that, in every government, the means are most wide of each other, and that the mixtures of monarchy and liberty render the yoke either more easy or more grievous ; I must take notice of a remark in Tacitus with regard

to the Romans under the emperors, that they neither could bear total slavery nor total liberty, *Nec totam servitutem pati possunt, nec totam libertatem*. This remark a celebrated poet has translated and applied to the English, in his lively description of Queen Elizabeth's policy and government.

*Et fit aimer son joug à l'Anglois indompté,  
Qui ne peut ni servir, ni vivre en liberté.*

HENRIADE, liv. 1.

According to these remarks, we are to consider the Roman government under the emperors as a mixture of despotism and liberty, where the despotism prevailed, and the English government as a mixture of the same kind, where the liberty predominates. The consequences are conformable to the foregoing observation; and as may be expected from those mixed forms of government, which beget a mutual watchfulness and jealousy. The Roman emperors were, many of them, the most frightful tyrants that ever disgraced human nature; and it is evident, that their cruelty was chiefly excited by their *jealousy*, and by their observing that all the great men of Rome bore with impatience the dominion of a family, which, but a little before, was nowise superior to their own. On the other hand, as the republican part of the government prevails in England, though with a great mixture of monarchy, it is obliged, for its own preservation, to maintain a watchful *jealousy* over the magistrate, to remove all discretionary powers, and to secure every one's life and fortune by general and inflexible laws. No action must be deemed a crime but what the law has plainly determined to be such: no crime must be imputed to a man but from a legal proof before his judges, and even

these judges must be his fellow subjects who are obliged, by their own interest, to have a watchful eye over the encroachments and violence of the ministers. From these causes it proceeds, that there is as much liberty, and even perhaps licentiousness, in Britain, as there were formerly slavery and tyranny in Rome.

These principles account for the great liberty of the press in these kingdoms, beyond what is indulged in any other government. It is apprehended that arbitrary power would steal in upon us, were we not careful to prevent its progress, and were there not an easy method of conveying the alarm from one end of the kingdom to the other. The spirit of the people must frequently be roused, in order to curb the ambition of the court; and the dread of rousing this spirit must be employed to prevent that ambition. Nothing so effectual to this purpose as the liberty of the press: by which all the learning, wit, and genius of the nation may be employed on the side of freedom, and every one be animated to its defence. As long, therefore, as the republican part of our government can maintain itself against the monarchical, it will naturally be careful to keep the press open, as of importance to its own preservation.

It must however be allowed that the unbounded liberty of the press, though it be difficult, perhaps impossible, to propose a suitable remedy for it, is one of the evils attending mixed forms of government.

## INSTINCT

(JOSEPH HENRY GREEN, 1791-1863)

WHAT is instinct? As I am not quite of Bonnet's opinion, 'that philosophers will in vain torment themselves to define instinct until they have spent some time in the head of the animal without actually being that animal,' I shall endeavour to explain the use of the term. I shall not think it necessary to controvert the opinions which have been offered on this subject—whether the ancient doctrine of Descartes, who supposed that animals were mere machines; or the modern one of Lamarek, who attributes instincts to habits impressed upon the organs of animals by the constant efflux of the nervous fluid to these organs, to which it has been determined in their efforts to perform certain actions to which their necessities have given birth. And it will be here premature to offer any refutation of the opinions of those who contend for the identity of this faculty with reason, and maintain that all the actions of animals are the result of invention and experience—an opinion maintained with considerable plausibility by Dr. Darwin.

Perhaps the most ready and certain mode of coming to a conclusion in this intricate inquiry will be by the apparently circuitous route of determining first what we do not mean by the word. Now we certainly do not mean, in the use of the term, any act of the vital power in the production or maintenance of an organ: nobody thinks of saying that the teeth grow by instinct, or that when the muscles are increased in vigour and size in consequence of exercise, it is from such a cause or principle. Neither

do we attribute instinct to the direct functions of the organs in providing for the continuance and sustentation of the whole co-organized body. No one talks of the liver secreting bile, or the heart acting for the propulsion of the blood, by instinct. Some, indeed, have maintained that breathing is an instinctive operation ; but surely this, as well as the former, is automatic, or at least is the necessary result of the organization of the parts in and by which the action is produced. These instances seem to be, if I may so say, below instinct. But, again, we do not attribute instinct to any actions preceded by a will conscious of its whole purpose, calculating its effects, and predetermining its consequences : nor to any exercise of the intellectual powers of which the whole scope, aim, and end are intellectual. In other terms, no man who values his words will talk of the instinct of a Howard, or of the instinctive operations of a Newton or Leibnitz, in those sublime efforts which ennoble and cast a lustre not less on the individuals than on the whole human race.

To what kind or mode of action shall we then look for the legitimate application of the term ? In answer to this query we may, I think, without fear of consequence, put the following cases, as exemplifying and justifying the use of the term instinct in an appropriate sense. First, when there appears an action, not included either in the mere functions of life, acting within the sphere of its own organismus ; nor yet an action attributable to the intelligent will or reason, yet at the same time not referable to any particular organ ; we then declare the presence of an instinct. We might illustrate this in the instance of a bull-calf butting before he has horns, in which the action can have no reference to its internal economy, to the presence of a particular organ, or to an intelligent



will. Secondly, likewise (if it be not included in the first) we attribute instinct where the organ is present, if only the act is equally anterior to all possible experience on the part of the individual agent ; as, for instance, when the beaver employs its tail for the construction of its dwelling ; the tailor-bird its bill for the formation of its pensile<sup>1</sup> habitation ; the spider its spinning organ for fabricating its artfully-woven nets ; or the viper its poison fang for its defence. And lastly, generally where there is an act of the whole body as one animal, not referable to a will conscious of its purpose, nor to its mechanism, nor to a habit derived from experience, nor previous frequent use. Here with most satisfaction, and without doubt of the propriety of the word, we declare an instinct ; as examples of which, we may adduce the migratory habits of birds ; the social instincts of the bees, the construction of their habitations, composed of cells formed with geometrical precision, adapted in capacity to different orders of the society, and forming storehouses for containing a supply of provisions ; not to mention similar instances in wasps, ants, termites, and the endless contrivances for protecting the future progeny.

But if it be admitted that we have rightly stated the application of the term, what, we may ask, is contained in the examples adduced, or what inferences are we to make as to the nature of instinct itself, as a source and principle of action ? We shall, perhaps, best aid ourselves in the inquiry by an example ; and let us take a very familiar one, of a caterpillar taking its food. The caterpillar seeks at once the plant which furnishes the appropriate aliment, and this even as soon as it creeps from the ovum ; and the food being taken into the stomach,

<sup>1</sup> Hanging.

the nutritious part is separated from the innutritious, and is disposed of for the support of the animal. The question then is, what is contained in this instance of instinct? In the first place, what does the vital power in the stomach do, if we generalize the account of the process, or express it in its most general terms? Manifestly it selects and applies appropriate means to an immediate end, prescribed by the constitution, first of the particular organ, and then of the whole body or organismus. This we have admitted is not instinct. But what does the caterpillar do? Does it not also select and apply appropriate means to an immediate end prescribed by its particular organization and constitution? But there is something more; it does this according to circumstances; and this we call instinct. But may there not be still something more involved? What shall we say of Huber's humble-bees? A dozen of these were put under a bell-glass along with a comb of about ten silken cocoons, so unequal in height as not to be capable of standing steadily; to remedy this, two or three of the humble-bees got upon the comb, stretched themselves over its edge, and with their heads downwards fixed their forefeet on the table on which the comb stood, and so with their hind feet kept the comb from falling: when these were weary others took their places. In this constrained and painful posture, fresh bees relieving their comrades at intervals, and each working in its turn, did these affectionate little insects support the comb for nearly three days, at the end of which time they had prepared sufficient wax to build pillars with it. And what is still further curious, the first pillars having got displaced, the bees had again recourse to the same manœuvre. What then is involved in this case? Evi-

dently the same selection and appropriation of means to an immediate end as before, but observe ! according to varying circumstances.

And here we are puzzled ; for this becomes understanding. At least no naturalist, however predetermined to contrast and oppose instinct to understanding, but ends at last in facts in which he himself can make out no difference. But are we hence to conclude that the instinct is the same, and identical with the human understanding ? Certainly not ; though the difference is not in the essentials of the definition, but in an addition to, or modification of, that which is essentially the same in both. In such cases, namely, as that which we have last adduced, in which instinct assumes the semblance of understanding, the act indicative of instinct is not clearly prescribed by the constitution or laws of the animal's peculiar organization, but arises out of the constitution and previous circumstances of the animal, and those habits, wants, and that predetermined sphere of action and operation which belong to the race, and beyond the limits of which it does not pass. If this be the case, I may venture to assert that I have determined an appropriate sense for instinct : namely, that it is a power of selecting and applying appropriate means to an immediate end, according to circumstances and the changes of circumstances, these being variable and varying, but yet so as to be referable to the general habits arising out of the constitution and previous circumstances of the animal, considered not as an individual but as a race.

We may here, perhaps, most fitly explain the error of those who contend for the identity of reason and instinct, and believe that the actions of animals are the

result of invention and experience. They have, no doubt, been deceived in their investigation of instinct by an efficient cause simulating a final cause, and the defect in their reasoning has arisen in consequence of observing in the instinctive operations of animals the adaptation of means to a relative end, from the assumption of a deliberate purpose. To this freedom or choice in action and purpose, instinct, in any appropriate sense of the word, cannot apply; and to justify and explain its introduction, we must have recourse to other and higher faculties than any manifested in the operations of instinct. It is evident, namely, in turning our attention to the distinguishing character of human actions, that there is, as in the inferior animals, a selection and appropriation of means to ends, but it is (not only according to circumstances, not only according to varying circumstances) according to varying purposes. But this is an attribute of the intelligent will, and no longer even mere understanding.

And here let me observe that the difficulty and delicacy of this investigation are greatly increased by our not considering the understanding (even our own) in itself, and as it would be were it not accompanied with and modified by the co-operation of the will, the moral feeling, and that faculty, perhaps best distinguished by the name of reason, of determining that which is universal and necessary, of fixing laws and principles, whether speculative or practical, and of contemplating a final purpose or end. This intelligent will—having a self-conscious purpose, under the guidance and light of the reason, by which its acts are made to bear as a whole upon some end in and for itself, and to which the understanding is subservient as an organ, or the faculty of selecting and

appropriating the means—seems best to account for the progressiveness of the human race which so evidently marks an insurmountable distinction and impassable barrier between man and the inferior animals; but which would be inexplicable, were there no other difference than in the degree of their intellectual faculties.

Man, doubtless, has his instincts, even in common with the inferior animals, and many of these are the germs of some of the best feelings of his nature. What, amongst many, might I present as a better illustration, or more beautiful instance, than the *storgē* or maternal instinct? But man's instincts are elevated and ennobled by the moral ends and purposes of his being. He is not destined to be the slave of blind impulses, a vessel purposeless, unmeant. He is constituted by his moral and intelligent will to be the first freed being, the master-work and the end of nature; but this freedom and high office can only coexist with fealty and devotion to the service of truth and virtue. And though we may even be permitted to use the term instinct, in order to designate those high impulses which, in the minority of man's rational being, shape his acts unconsciously to ultimate ends, and which in constituting the very character and impress of the humanity reveal the guidance of Providence; yet the convenience of the phrase, and the want of any other distinctive appellation for the influence *de supra*, working unconsciously in and on the whole human race, should not induce us to forget that the term instinct is only strictly applicable to the adaptive power, as the faculty, even in its highest proper form, of selecting and adapting appropriate means to proximate ends according to varying circumstances—a faculty which, however, only differs from human understanding in consequence of the latter

being enlightened by reason, and that the principles which actuate man as ultimate ends, and are designed for his conscious possession and guidance, are best and most properly named ideas.

## 35

## ASSOCIATION

(JOHN LOCKE, 1632-1704)

THOUGH I have, in the second book of my Essay concerning Human Understanding, treated of the association of ideas ; yet having done it there historically, as giving a view of the understanding in this as well as its several other ways of operating, rather than designing there to inquire into the remedies [that] ought to be applied to it : it will, under this latter consideration, afford other matter of thought to those who have a mind to instruct themselves thoroughly in the right way of conducting their understandings ; and that the rather, because this, if I mistake not, is as frequent a cause of mistake and error in us as perhaps anything else that can be named, and is a disease of the mind as hard to be cured as any ; it being a very hard thing to convince any one that things are not so, and naturally so, as they constantly appear to him.

By this one easy and unheeded miscarriage of the understanding, sandy and loose foundations become infallible principles, and will not suffer themselves to be touched or questioned : such unnatural connexions become by custom as natural to the mind as sun and light. Fire and warmth go together, and so seem to carry with them as natural an evidence as self-evident truths

themselves. And where then shall one with hopes of success begin the cure? Many men firmly embrace falsehood for truth; not only because they never thought otherwise, but also because, thus blinded as they have been from the beginning, they never could think otherwise; at least without a vigour of mind able to contest the empire of habit, and look into its own principles, a freedom which few men have the notion of in themselves, and fewer are allowed the practice of by others; it being the great art and business of the teachers and guides in most sects to suppress, as much as they can, this fundamental duty which every man owes himself, and [which] is the first steady step towards right and truth in the whole train of his actions and opinions. This would give one reason to suspect that such teachers are conscious to themselves of the falsehood or weakness of the tenets they profess, since they will not suffer the grounds whereon they are built to be examined; whereas those who seek truth only, and desire to own and propagate nothing else, freely expose their principles to the test, are pleased to have them examined, give men leave to reject them, if they can, and, if there be anything weak and unsound in them, are willing to have it detected, that they themselves, as well as others, may not lay any stress upon any received proposition beyond what the evidence of its truth will warrant and allow.

There is, I know, a great fault among all sorts of people of principling their children and scholars; which at last, when looked into, amounts to no more but making them imbibe their teachers' notions and tenets by an implicit faith, and firmly to adhere to them whether true or false. What colours may be given to this, or of what use it may be when practised upon the vulgar,

destined to labour and given up to the service of their bellies, I will not here inquire. But as to the ingenuous part of mankind, whose condition allows them leisure, and letters, and inquiry after truth, I can see no other right way of principling them, but to take heed, as much as may be, that, in their tender years, ideas that have no natural cohesion come not to be united in their heads, and that this rule be often inculcated to them to be their guide in the whole course of their lives and studies, viz. that they never suffer any ideas to be joined in their understandings in any other or stronger combination than what their own nature and correspondence give them ; and that they often examine those that they find linked together in their minds, whether this association of ideas be from the visible agreement that is in the ideas themselves, or from the habitual and prevailing custom of the mind joining them thus together in thinking.

This is for caution against this evil, before it be thoroughly riveted by custom in the understanding ; but he that would cure it, when habit has established it, must nicely observe the very quick and almost imperceptible motions of the mind in its habitual actions. What I have said in another place about the change of the ideas of sense into those of judgement may be proof of this. Let any one not skilled in painting be told when he sees bottles and tobacco pipes, and other things so painted, as they are in some places shown, that he does not see protuberances, and you will not convince him but by the touch : he will not believe that, by an instantaneous legerdemain of his own thoughts, one idea is substituted for the other. How frequent instances may one meet with of this in the arguings of the learned, who not seldom, in two ideas that they have been accustomed to join in



their minds, substitute one for the other ; and, I am apt to think, often without perceiving it themselves. This, whilst they are under the deceit of it, makes them incapable of conviction, and they applaud themselves as zealous champions for truth, when indeed they are contending for error. And the confusion of two different ideas, which a customary connexion of them in their minds hath made to them almost one, fills their heads with false views, and their reasonings with false consequences.

## 36

## FALLACIES

(JOHN LOCKE)

RIGHT understanding consists in the discovery and adherence to truth, and that in the perception of the visible or probable agreement or disagreement of ideas, as they are affirmed and denied one of another. From whence it is evident that the right use and conduct of the understanding, whose business is purely truth and nothing else, is that the mind should be kept in a perfect indifferency, not inclining to either side, any farther than evidence settles it by knowledge, or the overbalance of probability gives it the turn of assent and belief ; but yet it is very hard to meet with any discourse, wherein one may not perceive the author not only maintain (for that is reasonable and fit) but inclined and biassed to one side of the question, with marks of a desire that that should be true. If it be asked me, how authors who have such a bias and lean to it may be discovered, I answer, by observing how, in their writings or arguings, they are often led by their inclinations to change the ideas of the question, either by changing the terms, or by adding and

joining others to them, whereby the ideas under consideration are so varied as to be more serviceable to their purpose, and to be thereby brought to an easier and nearer agreement or more visible and remoter disagreement one with another. This is plain and direct sophistry; but I am far from thinking that, wherever it is found, it is made use of with design to deceive and mislead the readers. It is visible that men's prejudices and inclinations by this way impose often upon themselves; and their affections for truth, under their prepossession in favour of one side, is the very thing that leads them from it. Inclination suggests and slides into their discourse favourable terms, which introduce favourable ideas, till at last, by this means, that is concluded clear and evident, thus dressed up, which taken in its native state, by making use of none but the precise determined ideas, would find no admittance at all. The putting these glosses on what they affirm, these, as they are thought, handsome, easy, and graceful explications of what they are discoursing on, is so much the character of what is called and esteemed writing well, that it is very hard to think that authors will ever be persuaded to leave what serves so well to propagate their opinions and procure themselves credit in the world, for a more jejune and dry way of writing, by keeping to the same terms precisely annexed to the same ideas, a sour and blunt stiffness tolerable in mathematicians only, who force their way and make truth prevail by irresistible demonstration.

But yet if authors cannot be prevailed with to quit the looser, though more insinuating, ways of writing, if they will not think fit to keep close to truth and instruction by unvaried terms and plain unsophisticated

arguments, yet it concerns readers not to be imposed on by fallacies and the prevailing ways of insinuation. To do this, the surest and most effectual remedy is to fix in the mind the clear and distinct ideas of the question stripped of words ; and so likewise, in the train of argumentation, to take up the author's ideas, neglecting his words, observing how they connect or separate those in the question. He that does this will be able to cast off all that is superfluous ; he will see what is pertinent, what coherent, what is direct to, what slides by the question. This will readily show him all the foreign ideas in the discourse, and where they were brought in ; and though they perhaps dazzled the writer, yet he will perceive that they give no light nor strength to his reasonings.

This, though it be the shortest and easiest way of reading books with profit, and keeping one's self from being misled by great names or plausible discourses, yet, it being hard and tedious to those who have not accustomed themselves to it, it is not to be expected that every one (amongst those few who really pursue truth) should this way guard his understanding from being imposed on by the wilful or, at least, undesigned sophistry, which creeps into most of the books of argument. They that write against their conviction, or that next to them are resolved to maintain the tenets of a party they are engaged in, cannot be supposed to reject any arms that may help to defend their cause, and therefore such should be read with the greatest caution. And they who write for opinions they are sincerely persuaded of, and believe to be true, think they may so far allow themselves to indulge their laudable affection to truth, as to permit their esteem of it to give it the best colours, and set it off with the best expressions and dress they can, thereby

to gain it the easiest entrance into the minds of their readers and fix it deepest there.

One of those being the state of mind we may justly suppose most writers to be in, it is fit their readers, who apply to them for instruction, should not lay by that caution which becomes a sincere pursuit of truth and should make them always watchful against whatever might conceal or misrepresent it. If they have not the skill of representing to themselves the author's sense by pure ideas separated from sounds, and thereby divested of the false lights and deceitful ornaments of speech, this yet they should do, they should keep the precise question steadily in their minds, carry it along with them through the whole discourse, and suffer not the least alteration in the terms, either by addition, subtraction, or substituting any other. This every one can do who has a mind to it : and he that has not a mind to it, it is plain makes his understanding only the warehouse of other men's lumber ; I mean, false and unconcluding reasonings, rather than a repository of truth for his own use, which will prove substantial and stand him in stead when he has occasion for it. And whether such a one deals fairly by his own mind, and conducts his own understanding right, I leave to his own understanding to judge.

## 37

## IDOLS

(FRANCIS BACON, 1561-1626)

THE *Idols* and false Notions which have already pre-occupied the human Understanding, and are deeply rooted in it, not only so beset men's Minds, that they become difficult of access, but even when access is obtained,

will again meet and trouble us in the instauration of the Sciences, unless mankind, when forewarned, guard themselves with all possible care against them.

Four species of *Idols* beset the human mind: to which (for distinction's sake) we have assigned names: calling the first *Idols of the Tribe*; the second *Idols of the Den*; the third *Idols of the Market*; the fourth *Idols of the Theatre*.

The formation of Notions and Axioms on the foundations of true *Induction* is the only fitting remedy by which we can ward off and expel these *Idols*. It is, however, of great service to point them out. For the Doctrine of *Idols* bears the same relation to the *Interpretation of Nature*, as that of the Confutation of Sophisms does to common Logic.

The *Idols of the Tribe* are inherent in human Nature, and the very Tribe or race of man. For Man's Sense is falsely asserted to be the Standard of things. On the contrary, all the Perceptions, both of the Senses and the Mind, bear reference to man, and not to the Universe, and the human Mind resembles those uneven mirrors, which impart their own properties to different Objects, from which rays are emitted, and distort and disfigure them.

The *Idols of the Den* are those of each individual. For everybody (in addition to the Errors common to the race of man) has his own individual Den or cavern, which intercepts and corrupts the light of Nature; either from his own peculiar and singular disposition, or from his education and intercourse with others, or from his reading, and the authority acquired by those whom he reverences and admires, or from the different Impressions produced on the mind, as it happens to be preoccupied and predis-

posed, or equable and tranquil, and the like : so that the spirit of man (according to its several dispositions) is variable, confused, and as it were actuated by chance ; and *Heraclitus* said well that men search for Knowledge in lesser Worlds, and not in the greater or common world.

There are also *Idols* formed by the reciprocal intercourse and society of man with man, which we call *Idols of the Market*, from the commerce and association of men with each other. For Men converse by means of language ; but words are formed at the will of the generality ; and there arises from a bad and unapt formation of words a wonderful obstruction to the mind. Nor can the definitions and explanations, with which learned men are wont to guard and protect themselves in some instances, afford a complete remedy : words still manifestly force the understanding, throw everything into confusion, and lead mankind into vain and innumerable Controversies and fallacies.

Lastly, there are *Idols* which have crept into men's minds from the various Dogmas of peculiar systems of Philosophy, and also from the perverted rules of Demonstration, and these we denominate *Idols of the Theatre*. For we regard all the systems of Philosophy hitherto received or imagined as so many plays brought out and performed, creating fictitious and theatrical Worlds. Nor do we speak only of the present systems, or of the Philosophy and Sects of the ancients, since numerous other plays of a similar nature can be still composed and made to agree with each other, the causes of the most opposite errors being generally the same. Nor, again, do we allude merely to the general systems, but also to many Elements and Axioms of Sciences, which have become inveterate by tradition, implicit credence, and neglect.

## HASTE

(JOHN LOCKE, 1632-1704)

THE eagerness and strong bent of the mind after knowledge, if not warily regulated, is often an hindrance to it. It still presses into farther discoveries and new objects, and catches at the variety of knowledge, and therefore often stays not long enough on what is before it to look into it as it should, for haste to pursue what is yet out of sight. He that rides post through a country may be able, from the transient view, to tell how in general the parts lie, and may be able to give some loose description of here a mountain and there a plain, here a morass and there a river, woodland in one part and savanas<sup>1</sup> in another. Such superficial ideas and observations as these he may collect in galloping over it. But the more useful observations of the soil, plants, animals, and inhabitants, with their several sorts and properties, must necessarily escape him; and it is seldom men ever discover the rich mines without some digging. Nature commonly lodges her treasure and jewels in rocky ground. If the matter be knotty, and the sense lies deep, the mind must stop and buckle to it, and stick upon it with labour and thought and close contemplation, and not leave it till it has mastered the difficulty, and got possession of truth. But here care must be taken to avoid the other extreme: a man must not stick at every useless nicety, and expect mysteries of science in every trivial question or scruple that he may raise. He that will stand to pick up and examine every pebble that comes in his way is as unlikely to return enriched and loaden with jewels as the other

<sup>1</sup> Extensive woodless plains.

that travelled full speed. Truths are not the better nor the worse for their obviousness or difficulty, but their value is to be measured by their usefulness and tendency. Insignificant observations should not take up any of our minutes, and those that enlarge our view, and give light towards farther and useful discoveries, should not be neglected, though they stop our course, and spend some of our time in a fixed attention.

There is another haste that does often and will mislead the mind, if it be left to itself and its own conduct. The understanding is naturally forward, not only to learn its knowledge by variety (which makes it skip over one to get speedily to another part of knowledge), but also eager to enlarge its views by running too fast into general observations and conclusions, without a due examination of particulars enough whereon to found those general axioms. This seems to enlarge their stock, but it is of fancies, not realities; such theories built upon narrow foundations stand but weakly, and, if they fall not of themselves, are at least very hard to be supported against the assaults of opposition. And thus men, being too hasty to erect to themselves general notions and ill-grounded theories, find themselves deceived in their stock of knowledge, when they come to examine their hastily assumed maxims themselves, or to have them attacked by others. General observations drawn from particulars are the jewels of knowledge, comprehending great store in a little room; but they are therefore to be made with the greater care and caution, lest, if we take counterfeit for true, our loss and shame be the greater when our stock comes to a severe scrutiny. One or two particulars may suggest hints of inquiry, and they do well who take those hints; but if they turn them into



conclusions, and make them presently general rules, they are forward indeed, but it is only to impose on themselves by propositions assumed for truths without sufficient warrant. To make such observations is, as has been already remarked, to make the head a magazine of materials which can hardly be called knowledge, or at least it is but like a collection of lumber not reduced to use or order ; and he that makes everything an observation has the same useless plenty and much more falsehood mixed with it. The extremes on both sides are to be avoided, and he will be able to give the best account of his studies who keeps his understanding in the right mean between them.

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## . MATHEMATICS

(JOHN LOCKE)

I HAVE mentioned mathematics as a way to settle in the mind a habit of reasoning closely and in train ; not that I think it necessary that all men should be deep mathematicians, but that having got the way of reasoning, which that study necessarily brings the mind to, they might be able to transfer it to other parts of knowledge as they shall have occasion. For, in all sorts of reasoning, every single argument should be managed as a mathematical demonstration, the connexion and dependence of ideas should be followed till the mind is brought to the source on which it bottoms and observes the coherence all along, though, in proofs of probability, one such train is not enough to settle the judgement as in demonstrative knowledge.

Where a truth is made out by one demonstration, there needs no farther inquiry, but in probabilities

where there wants demonstration to establish the truth beyond doubt, there it is not enough to trace one argument to its source and observe its strength and weakness, but all the arguments, after having been so examined on both sides, must be laid in balance one against another, and upon the whole the understanding determine its assent.

This is a way of reasoning the understanding should be accustomed to, which is so different from what the illiterate are used to, that even learned men oftentimes seem to have very little or no notion of it. Nor is it to be wondered, since the way of disputing in the schools leads them quite away from it, by insisting on one topical argument, by the success of which the truth or falsehood of the question is to be determined and victory adjudged to the opponent or defendant; which is all one as if one should balance an account by one sum charged and discharged, when there are an hundred others to be taken into consideration.

This therefore it would be well if men's minds were accustomed to, and that early, that they might not erect their opinions upon one single view, when so many other are requisite to make up the account, and must come into the reckoning before a man can form a right judgement. This would enlarge their minds, and give a due freedom to their understandings, that they might not be led into error by presumption, laziness, or precipitancy; for I think nobody can approve such a conduct of the understanding as should mislead it from truth, though it be ever so much in fashion to make use of it.

To this perhaps it will be objected, that to manage the understanding, as I propose, would require every man to be a scholar, and to be furnished with all the

materials of knowledge, and exercised in all the ways of reasoning. To which I answer, that it is a shame for those that have time and the means to attain knowledge, to want any helps or assistance for the improvement of their understandings that are to be got, and to such I would be thought here chiefly to speak. Those, methinks, who by the industry and parts of their ancestors have been set free from a constant drudgery to their backs and their bellies, should bestow some of their spare time on their heads, and open their minds by some trials and essays in all the sorts and matters of reasoning. I have before mentioned mathematics, wherein algebra gives new helps and views to the understanding. If I propose these, it is not, as I said, to make every man a thorough mathematician, or a deep algebraist; but yet I think the study of them is of infinite use even to grown men.

First, by experimentally convincing them that, to make any one reason well, it is not enough to have parts where-with he is satisfied and that serve him well enough in his ordinary course. A man in those studies will see that, however good he may think his understanding, yet in many things, and those very visible, it may fail him. This would take off that presumption that most men have of themselves in this part; and they would not be so apt to think their minds wanted no helps to enlarge them, that there could be nothing added to the acuteness and penetration of their understandings.

Secondly, the study of mathematics would show them the necessity there is, in reasoning, to separate all the distinct ideas, and see the habitudes that all those concerned in the present inquiry have to one another, and to lay by those which relate not to the proposition in hand and wholly to leave them out of the reckoning.

This is that which in other subjects, besides quantity, is what is absolutely requisite to just reasoning, though in them it is not so easily observed nor so carefully practised. In those parts of knowledge where it is thought demonstration has nothing to do, men reason as it were in the lump: and, if, upon a summary and confused view or upon a partial consideration, they can raise the appearance of a probability, they usually rest content; especially if it be in a dispute where every little straw is laid hold on, and everything that can but be drawn in any way to give colour to the argument is advanced with ostentation. But that mind is not in a posture to find the truth, that does not distinctly take all the parts asunder, and, omitting what is not at all to the point, draw a conclusion from the result of all the particulars which any way influence it. There is another no less useful habit to be got by an application to mathematical demonstrations, and that is, of using the mind to a long train of consequences; but, having mentioned that already, I shall not again here repeat it.

As to men whose fortunes and time is narrower, what may suffice them is not of that vast extent as may be imagined, and so comes not within the objection.

Nobody is under an obligation to know everything. Knowledge and science in general is the business only of those who are at ease and leisure. Those who have particular callings ought to understand them; and it is no unreasonable proposal, nor impossible to be compassed, that they should think and reason right about what is their daily employment. This one cannot think them incapable of, without levelling them with the brutes, and charging them with a stupidity below the rank of rational creatures.

## ON THE IGNORANCE OF THE LEARNED

(WILLIAM HAZLITT, 1778-1830)

For the more languages a man can speak,  
His talent has but sprung the greater leak :  
And, for the industry he has spent upon 't,  
Must full as much some other way discount.  
The Hebrew, Chaldee, and the Syriac  
Do, like their letters, set men's reason back,  
And turn their wits that strive to understand it  
(Like those that write the characters) left-handed.  
Yet he that is but able to express  
No sense at all in several languages,  
Will pass for learned than he that 's known  
To speak the strongest reason in his own.

BUTLER.

THE description of persons who have the fewest ideas of all others are mere authors and readers. It is better to be able neither to read nor write than to be able to do nothing else. A loungeur who is ordinarily seen with a book in his hand is (we may be almost sure) equally without the power or inclination to attend either to what passes around him or in his own mind. Such a one may be said to carry his understanding about with him in his pocket, or to leave it at home on his library shelves. He is afraid of venturing on any train of reasoning, or of striking out any observation that is not mechanically suggested to him by passing his eyes over certain legible characters ; shrinks from the fatigue of thought, which, for want of practice, becomes insupportable to him ; and sits down contented with an endless, wearisome succession of words and half-formed images, which

fill the void of the mind, and continually efface one another. Learning is, in too many cases, but a foil to common-sense ; a substitute for true knowledge. Books are less often made use of as 'spectacles' to look at nature with, than as blinds to keep out its strong light and shifting scenery from weak eyes and indolent dispositions. The book-worm wraps himself up in his web of verbal generalities, and sees only the glimmering shadows of things reflected from the minds of others. Nature *puts him out*. The impressions of real objects, stripped of the disguises of words and voluminous round-about descriptions, are blows that stagger him ; their variety distracts, their rapidity exhausts him ; and he turns from the bustle, the noise, and glare, and whirling motion of the world about him (which he has not an eye to follow in its fantastic changes, nor an understanding to reduce to fixed principles), to the quiet monotony of the dead languages, and the less startling and more intelligible combinations of the letters of the alphabet. It is well, it is perfectly well. 'Leave me to my repose', is the motto of the sleeping and the dead. You might as well ask the paralytic to leap from his chair and throw away his crutch, or, without a miracle, to 'take up his bed and walk', as expect the learned reader to throw down his book and think for himself. He clings to it for his intellectual support ; and his dread of being left to himself is like the horror of a vacuum. He can only breathe a learned atmosphere, as other men breathe common air. He is a borrower of sense. He has no ideas of his own, and must live on those of other people. The habit of supplying our ideas from foreign sources 'enfeebles all internal strength of thought', as a course of dram-drinking destroys the tone of the stomach. The

faculties of the mind, when not exerted, or when cramped by custom and authority, become listless, torpid, and unfit for the purposes of thought or action. Can we wonder at the languor and lassitude which is thus produced by a life of learned sloth and ignorance ; by poring over lines and syllables that excite little more idea or interest than if they were the characters of an unknown tongue, till the eye closes on vacancy, and the book drops from the feeble hand ? I would rather be a wood-cutter, or the meanest hind, that all day ' sweats in the eye of Phoebus, and at night sleeps in Elysium ', than wear out my life so, 'twixt dreaming and awake. The learned author differs from the learned student in this, that the one transcribes what the other reads. The learned are mere literary drudges. If you set them upon original composition, their heads turn, they don't know where they are. The indefatigable readers of books are like the everlasting copiers of pictures, who, when they attempt to do anything of their own, find they want an eye quick enough, a hand steady enough, and colours bright enough, to trace the living forms of nature.

Any one who has passed through the regular gradations of a classical education, and is not made a fool by it, may consider himself as having had a very narrow escape. It is an old remark, that boys who shine at school do not make the greatest figure when they grow up and come out into the world. The things, in fact, which a boy is set to learn at school, and on which his success depends, are things which do not require the exercise either of the highest or the most useful faculties of the mind. Memory (and that of the lowest kind) is the chief faculty called into play in conning over and

repeating lessons by rote in grammar, in languages, in geography, arithmetic, &c., so that he who has the most of this technical memory, with the least turn for other things, which have a stronger and more natural claim upon his childish attention, will make the most forward schoolboy. The jargon containing the definitions of the parts of speech, the rules for casting up an account, or the inflections of a Greek verb, can have no attraction to the tyro<sup>1</sup> of ten years old, except as they are imposed as a task upon him by others, or from his feeling the want of sufficient relish or amusement in other things. A lad with a sickly constitution and no very active mind, who can just retain what is pointed out to him, and has neither sagacity to distinguish nor spirit to enjoy for himself, will generally be at the head of his form. An idler at school, on the other hand, is one who has high health and spirits, who has the free use of his limbs, with all his wits about him, who feels the circulation of his blood and the motion of his heart, who is ready to laugh and cry in a breath, and who had rather chase a ball or a butterfly, feel the open air in his face, look at the fields or the sky, follow a winding path, or enter with eagerness into all the little conflicts and interests of his acquaintances and friends, than doze over a musty spelling-book, repeat barbarous distichs<sup>2</sup> after his master, sit so many hours pinioned to a writing-desk, and receive his reward for the loss of time and pleasure in paltry prize-medals at Christmas and Midsummer. There is indeed a degree of stupidity which prevents children from learning the usual lessons, or ever arriving at these puny academic honours. But what passes for stupidity is much oftener a want of

<sup>1</sup> Beginner.

<sup>2</sup> Doggerel couplets.



interest, of a sufficient motive to fix the attention and force a reluctant application to the dry and unmeaning pursuits of school-learning. The best capacities are as much above this drudgery as the dullest are beneath it. Our men of the greatest genius have not been most distinguished for their acquirements at school or at the university.

Th' enthusiast Fancy was a truant ever.

Gray and Collins were among the instances of this wayward disposition. Such persons do not think so highly of the advantages, nor can they submit their imaginations so servilely to the trammels of strict scholastic discipline. There is a certain kind and degree of intellect in which words take root, but into which things have not power to penetrate. A mediocrity of talent, with a certain slenderness of moral constitution, is the soil that produces the most brilliant specimens of successful prize-essayists and Greek epigrammatists. It should not be forgotten that the least respectable character among modern politicians was the cleverest boy at Eton.

Learning is the knowledge of that which is not generally known to others, and which we can only derive at second-hand from books or other artificial sources. The knowledge of that which is before us, or about us, which appeals to our experience, passions, and pursuits, to the bosoms and businesses of men, is not learning. Learning is the knowledge of that which none but the learned know. He is the most learned man who knows the most of what is farthest removed from common life and actual observation, that is of the least practical utility, and least liable to be brought to the test of experience, and that, having

been handed down through the greatest number of intermediate stages, is the most full of uncertainty, difficulties, and contradictions. It is seeing with the eyes of others, hearing with their ears, and pinning our faith on their understandings. The learned man prides himself in the knowledge of names and dates, not of men or things. He thinks and cares nothing about his next-door neighbours, but he is deeply read in the tribes and castes of the Hindoos and Calmuc Tartars. He can hardly find his way into the next street, though he is acquainted with the exact dimensions of Constantinople and Pekin. He does not know whether his oldest acquaintance is a knave or a fool, but he can pronounce a pompous lecture on all the principal characters in history. He cannot tell whether an object is black or white, round or square, and yet he is a professed master of the laws of optics and the rules of perspective. He knows as much of what he talks about as a blind man does of colours. He cannot give a satisfactory answer to the plainest question, nor is he ever in the right in any one of his opinions upon any one matter of fact that really comes before him, and yet he gives himself out for an infallible judge on all these points, of which it is impossible that he or any other person living should know anything but by conjecture. He is expert in all the dead and in most of the living languages ; but he can neither speak his own fluently, nor write it correctly. A person of this class, the second Greek scholar of his day, undertook to point out several solecisms <sup>1</sup> in Milton's Latin style ; and in his own performance there is hardly a sentence of common English. Such was Dr. ——. Such is Dr. ——. Such was not Porson. He was an exception that confirmed

<sup>1</sup> Errors.

the general rule—a man that, by uniting talents and knowledge with learning, made the distinction between them more striking and palpable.

A mere scholar, who knows nothing but books, must be ignorant even of them. 'Books do not teach the use of books.' How should he know anything of a work who knows nothing of the subject of it? The learned pedant is conversant with books only as they are made of other books, and those again of others, without end. He parrots those who have parroted others. He can translate the same word into ten different languages, but he knows nothing of the *thing* which it means in any one of them. He stuffs his head with authorities built on authorities, with quotations quoted from quotations, while he locks up his senses, his understanding, and his heart. He is unacquainted with the maxims and manners of the world; he is to seek<sup>1</sup> in the characters of individuals. He sees no beauty in the face of nature or of art. To him 'the mighty world of eye and ear' is hid; and 'knowledge', except at one entrance, 'quite shut out'. His pride takes part with his ignorance; and his self-importance rises with the number of things of which he does not know the value, and which he therefore despises as unworthy of his notice. He knows nothing of pictures — 'of the colouring of Titian, the grace of Raphael, the purity of Domenichino, the *corregiosity* of Correggio, the learning of Poussin, the airs of Guido, the taste of the Carracci, or the grand contour of Michael Angelo'—of all those glories of the Italian and miracles of the Flemish school, which have filled the eyes of mankind with delight, and to the study and imitation of which thousands have in vain devoted their lives. These are to him as if they

<sup>1</sup> At a loss.

had never been, a mere dead letter, a byword ; and no wonder, for he neither sees nor understands their prototypes<sup>1</sup> in nature. A print of Rubens' Watering-place or Claude's Enchanted Castle may be hanging on the walls of his room for months without his once perceiving them ; and if you point them out to him he will turn away from them. The language of nature, or of art (which is another nature), is one that he does not understand. He repeats indeed the names of Apelles and Phidias, because they are to be found in classic authors, and boasts of their works as prodigies, because they no longer exist ; or when he sees the finest remains of Grecian art actually before him in the Elgin Marbles, takes no other interest in them than as they lead to a learned dispute, and (which is the same thing) a quarrel about the meaning of a Greek particle. He is equally ignorant of music ; he ' knows no touch of it ', from the strains of the all-accomplished Mozart to the shepherd's pipe upon the mountain. His ears are nailed to his books ; and deadened with the sound of the Greek and Latin tongues, and the din and smithery of school-learning. Does he know anything more of poetry ? He knows the number of feet in a verse, and of acts in a play ; but of the soul or spirit he knows nothing. He can turn a Greek ode into English, or a Latin epigram into Greek verse ; but whether either is worth the trouble he leaves to the critics. Does he understand ' the act and practique part of life ' better than ' the theorique ' ? No. He knows no liberal or mechanic art, no trade or occupation, no game of skill or chance. Learning ' has no skill in surgery ', in agriculture, in building, in working in wood or in iron ; it cannot make any instrument

<sup>1</sup> Originals.

of labour, or use it when made ; it cannot handle the plough or the spade, or the chisel or the hammer ; it knows nothing of hunting or hawking, fishing or shooting, of horses or dogs, of fencing or dancing, or cudgel-playing, or bowls, or cards, or tennis, or anything else. The learned professor of all arts and sciences cannot reduce any one of them to practice, though he may contribute an account of them to an Encyclopedia. He has not the use of his hands nor of his feet ; he can neither run, nor walk, nor swim ; and he considers all those who actually understand and can exercise any of these arts of body or mind as vulgar and mechanical men—though to know almost any one of them in perfection requires long time and practice, with powers originally fitted, and a turn of mind particularly devoted to them. It does not require more than this to enable the learned candidate to arrive, by painful study, at a doctor's degree and a fellowship, and to eat, drink, and sleep the rest of his life !

The thing is plain. All that men really understand is confined to a very small compass ; to their daily affairs and experience ; to what they have an opportunity to know, and motives to study or practise. The rest is affectation and imposture. The common people have the use of their limbs ; for they live by their labour or skill. They understand their own business and the characters of those they have to deal with ; for it is necessary that they should. They have eloquence to express their passions, and wit at will to express their contempt and provoke laughter. Their natural use of speech is not hung up in monumental mockery, in an obsolete language ; nor is their sense of what is ludicrous, or readiness at finding out allusions to express it, buried

in collections of *Anas*<sup>1</sup>. You will hear more good things on the outside of a stage-coach from London to Oxford than if you were to pass a twelvemonth with the undergraduates, or heads of colleges, of that famous university; and more *home* truths are to be learnt from listening to a noisy debate in an alehouse than from attending to a formal one in the House of Commons. An elderly country gentlewoman will often know more of character, and be able to illustrate it by more amusing anecdotes taken from the history of what has been said, done, and gossiped in a country town for the last fifty years, than the best blue-stocking of the age will be able to glean from that sort of learning which consists in an acquaintance with all the novels and satirical poems published in the same period. People in towns, indeed, are woefully deficient in a knowledge of character, which they see only *in the bust*, not as a whole-length. People in the country not only know all that has happened to a man, but trace his virtues or vices, as they do his features, in their descent through several generations, and solve some contradiction in his behaviour by a cross in the breed half a century ago. The learned know nothing of the matter, either in town or country. Above all, the mass of society have common sense, which the learned in all ages want. The vulgar are in the right when they judge for themselves; they are wrong when they trust to their blind guides. The celebrated Nonconformist divine, Baxter, was almost stoned to death by the good women of Kidderminster, for asserting from the pulpit that 'hell was paved with infants' skulls'; but, by the force of argument, and of learned quotations from the Fathers, the reverend preacher at length prevailed over the scruples of his congregation, and over reason and humanity.

<sup>1</sup> Sayings by authors, e.g. Dickensiana, Tennysonianana.

Such is the use which has been made of human learning. The labourers in this vineyard seem as if it was their object to confound all common-sense, and the distinctions of good and evil, by means of traditional maxims and preconceived notions taken upon trust, and increasing in absurdity with increase of age. They pile hypothesis on hypothesis, mountain high, till it is impossible to come at the plain truth on any question. They see things, not as they are, but as they find them in books, and 'wink and shut their apprehensions up', in order that they may discover nothing to interfere with their prejudices or convince them of their absurdity. It might be supposed that the height of human wisdom consisted in maintaining contradictions and rendering nonsense sacred. There is no dogma, however fierce or foolish, to which these persons have not set their seals, and tried to impose on the understandings of their followers as the will of Heaven, clothed with all the terrors and sanctions of religion. How little has the human understanding been directed to find out the true and useful ! How much ingenuity has been thrown away in the defence of creeds and systems ! How much time and talents have been wasted in theological controversy, in law, in politics, in verbal criticism, in judicial astrology, and in finding out the art of making gold ! What actual benefit do we reap from the writings of a Laud or a Whitgift, or of Bishop Bull or Bishop Waterland, or Prideaux's *Connexions*, or *Beausobre*, or *Calmet*, or *St. Augustine*, or *Puffendorf*, or *Vattel*, or from the more literal but equally learned and unprofitable labours of *Scaliger*, *Cardan*, and *Scioppius* ? How many grains of sense are there in their thousand folio or quarto volumes ? What would the world lose if they were committed to

the flames to-morrow? Or are they not already 'gone to the vault of all the Capulets'? Yet all these were oracles in their time, and would have scoffed at you or me, at common-sense and human nature, for differing with them. It is our turn to laugh now.

To conclude this subject. The most sensible people to be met with in society are men of business and of the world, who argue from what they see and know, instead of spinning cobweb distinctions of what things ought to be. Women have often more of what is called *good sense* than men. They have fewer pretensions; are less implicated in theories; and judge of objects more from their immediate and involuntary impression on the mind, and, therefore, more truly and naturally. They cannot reason wrong; for they do not reason at all. They do not think or speak by rule; and they have in general more eloquence and wit, as well as sense, on that account. By their wit, sense, and eloquence together, they generally contrive to govern their husbands. Their style, when they write to their friends (not for the book-sellers), is better than that of most authors.—Uneducated people have most exuberance of invention and the greatest freedom from prejudice. Shakespeare's was evidently an uneducated mind, both in the freshness of his imagination and in the variety of his views; as Milton's was scholastic, in the texture both of his thoughts and feelings. Shakespeare had not been accustomed to write themes at school in favour of virtue or against vice. To this we owe the unaffected but healthy tone of his dramatic morality. If we wish to know the force of human genius we should read Shakespeare. If we wish to see the insignificance of human learning we may study his commentators.



## OF STUDIES

(FRANCIS BACON, 1561-1626)

STUDIES serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability. Their chief use for delight is in their privateness and retiring ; for ornament is in discourse ; and for ability is in the judgement and disposition of business ; for expert<sup>1</sup> men can execute, and perhaps judge of particulars, one by one ; but the general counsels, and the plots and marshalling of affairs, come best from those that are learned. To spend too much time in studies is sloth ; to use them too much for ornament is affectation ; to make judgement wholly by their rules is the humour of a scholar ; they perfect nature, and are perfected by experience—for natural abilities are like natural plants, that need pruning by study ; and studies themselves do give forth directions too much at large, except they be bounded in by experience. Crafty<sup>2</sup> men contemn studies, simple men admire them, and wise men use them, for they teach not their own use ; but that is a wisdom without them, and above them, won by observation. Read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse, but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested ; that is, some books are to be read only in parts ; others to be read, but not curiously<sup>3</sup> ; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention. Some books also may be read by deputy, and extracts

<sup>1</sup> Practised.<sup>2</sup> Skilled in manual arts.<sup>3</sup> With care.

made of them by others ; but that would be only in the less important arguments, and the meaner sort of books ; else distilled books are, like common distilled waters, flashy things. Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man ; and, therefore, if a man write little, he had need have a great memory ; if he confer little, he had need have a present wit ; and if he read little, he had need have much cunning<sup>1</sup>, to seem to know that he doth not. Histories make men wise ; poets witty<sup>2</sup> ; the mathematics subtle ; natural philosophy deep ; moral, grave ; logic and rhetoric, able to contend ; ‘ Abeunt studia in mores ’—nay, there is no stond<sup>3</sup> or impediment in the wit but may be wrought out by fit studies, like as diseases of the body may have appropriate exercises—bowling is good for the stone and reins, shooting<sup>4</sup> for the lungs and breast, gentle walking for the stomach, riding for the head, and the like ; so, if a man’s wits be wandering, let him study the mathematics, for in demonstrations, if his wit be called away never so little, he must begin again ; if his wit be not apt to distinguish or find differences, let him study the schoolmen, for they are ‘ cumini sectores ’<sup>5</sup> ; if he be not apt to beat over<sup>6</sup> matters, and to call upon one thing to prove and illustrate another, let him study the lawyers’ cases—so every defect of the mind may have a special receipt.

<sup>1</sup> Skill.<sup>2</sup> Imaginative.<sup>3</sup> Stop, hindrance.<sup>4</sup> Archery.<sup>5</sup> Hair-splitters (lit. splitters of cumin seed).<sup>6</sup> Investigate thoroughly.

## THE PROGRESS OF THE MECHANICAL ARTS

(DANIEL WEBSTER, 1782-1852)

HUMAN sagacity, stimulated by human wants, seizes first on the nearest natural assistant. The power of his own arm is an early lesson among the studies of primitive man. This is animal strength ; and from this he rises to the conception of employing, for his own use, the strength of other animals. A stone, impelled by the power of his arm, he finds will produce a greater effect than the arm itself ; this is a species of mechanical power. The effect results from a combination of the moving force with the gravity of a heavy body. The limb of a tree is a rude but powerful instrument ; it is a lever. And the mechanical powers being all discovered, like other natural qualities, by induction (I use the word as Bacon used it), or experience, and not by any reasoning *a priori*, their progress has kept pace with the general civilization and education of nations. The history of mechanical philosophy, while it strongly illustrates, in its general results, the force of the human mind, exhibits, in its details, most interesting pictures of ingenuity struggling with the conception of new combinations, and of deep, intense, and powerful thought, stretched to its utmost to find out, or deduce, the general principle from the indications of particular facts. We are now so far advanced beyond the age when the principal, leading, important mathematical discoveries were made, and they have become so much matter of common knowledge, that it is not easy to feel their impor-

tance, or be justly sensible what an epoch in the history of science each constituted. The half-frantic exultation of Archimedes, when he had solved the problem respecting the crown of Hiero, was on an occasion and for a cause certainly well allowing very high joy. And so also was the duplication of the cube.

The altar of Apollo, at Athens, was a square block or cube, and to double it required the duplication of the cube. This was a process involving an unascertained mathematical principle. It was quite natural, therefore, that it should be a traditional story, that by way of atoning for some affront to that god, the oracle commanded the Athenians to *double his altar*; an injunction, we know, which occupied the keen sagacity of the Greek geometers for more than half a century before they were able to obey it. It is to the great honour, however, of this inimitable people, the Greeks, a people whose genius seems to have been equally fitted for the investigations of science and the works of imagination, that the immortal Euclid, centuries before our era, composed his *Elements of Geometry*; a work which, for two thousand years, has been, and still continues to be, a text-book for instruction in that science.

A history of mechanical philosophy, however, would not begin with Greece. There is a wonder beyond Greece. Higher up in the annals of mankind, nearer, far nearer, to the origin of our race, out of all reach of letters, beyond the sources of tradition, beyond all history except what remains in the monuments of her own art, stands Egypt, the mother of nations! Egypt! Thebes! the Labyrinth! the Pyramids! Who shall explain the mysteries which these names suggest? The Pyramids! Who can inform us whether it was by mere numbers, and patience, and

labour, perhaps aided by the simple lever ; or if not, by what forgotten combinations of power, by what now unknown machines, mass was thus aggregated to mass, and quarry piled on quarry, till solid granite seemed to cover the earth and reach the skies ?

The ancients discovered many things, but they left many things also to be discovered ; and this, as a general truth, is what our posterity, a thousand years hence, will be able to say, doubtless, when we and our generation shall be recorded also among the ancients. For, indeed, God seems to have proposed His material universe as a standing perpetual study to His intelligent creatures ; where, ever learning, they can yet never learn all ; and if that material universe shall last till man shall have discovered all that is unknown, but which, by the progressive improvement of his faculties, he is capable of knowing, it will remain through a duration beyond human measurement, and beyond human comprehension.

The ancients knew nothing of our present system of arithmetical notation ; nothing of algebra, and, of course, nothing of the important application of algebra to geometry. They had not learned the use of logarithms, and were ignorant of fluxions<sup>1</sup>. They had not attained to any just method for the mensuration of the earth, a matter of great moment to astronomy, navigation, and other branches of useful knowledge. It is scarcely necessary to add, that they were ignorant of the great results which have followed the development of the principle of gravitation.

In the useful and practical arts, many inventions and contrivances, to the production of which the degree of ancient knowledge would appear to us to have been

<sup>1</sup> The analysis of infinitely small variable quantities.

adequate, and which seem quite obvious, are yet of late origin. The application of water, for example, to turn a mill, is a thing not known to have been accomplished at all in Greece, and is not supposed to have been attempted at Rome till in or near the age of Augustus. The production of the same effect by wind is a still later invention. It dates only in the seventh century of our era. The propulsion of the saw by any other power than that of the arm, is treated as a novelty in England so late as in the middle of the sixteenth century. The Bishop of Ely, ambassador from the Queen of England to the Pope, says he saw, 'at Lyons, a saw-mill driven with an upright wheel, and the water that makes it go is gathered into a narrow trough, which delivereth the same water to the wheels. This wheel hath a piece of timber put to the axletree end, like the handle of a *broch* (a hand organ), and fastened to the end of the saw, which being turned with the force of water, hoisteth up the saw, that it continually eateth in, and the handle of the same is kept in a rigall<sup>1</sup> of wood from severing. Also the timber lieth, as it were, upon a ladder, which is brought by little and little to the saw by another vice.' From this description of the primitive power-saw, it would seem that it was probably fast only at one end, and that the *broch* and *rigall* performed the part of the arm in the common use of the hand-saw.

It must always have been a very considerable object for men to possess, or obtain, the power of raising water otherwise than by mere manual labour. Yet nothing like the common suction-pump has been found among rude nations. It has arrived at its present state only by slow and doubtful steps of improvement; and, indeed,

<sup>1</sup> Groove.

in that present state, however obvious and unattractive, it is something of an abstruse and refined invention. It was unknown in China until Europeans visited the 'Celestial Empire'; and is still unknown in other parts of Asia, beyond the pale of European settlements, or the reach of European communication. The Greeks and Romans are supposed to have been ignorant of it, in the early times of their history; and it is usually said to have come from Alexandria, where physical science was much cultivated by the Greek school, under the patronage of the Ptolemies.

These few and scattered historical notices of important inventions have been introduced only for the purpose of suggesting that there is much which is both curious and instructive in the history of mechanics: and that many things, which to us, in our state of knowledge, seem so obvious that we should think they would at once force themselves on men's adoption, have, nevertheless, been accomplished slowly, and by painful efforts.

But if the history of the progress of the mechanical arts be interesting, still more so, doubtless, would be the exhibition of their present state, and a full display of the extent to which they are now carried. The slightest glance must convince us that mechanical power and mechanical skill, as they are now exhibited in Europe and America, mark an epoch in human history worthy of all admiration. Machinery is made to perform what has formerly been the toil of human hands, to an extent that astonishes the most sanguine, with a degree of power to which no number of human arms is equal, and with such precision and exactness as almost to suggest the notion of reason and intelligence in the machines themselves. Every natural agent is put unrelentingly to the task.

The winds work, the waters work, the elasticity of metals works ; gravity is solicited into a thousand new forms of action ; levers are multiplied upon levers ; wheels revolve on the peripheries of other wheels. The saw and the plane are tortured into an accommodation to new uses ; and, last of all, with inimitable power, and ‘ with whirlwind sound ’, comes the potent agency of steam. In comparison with the past, what centuries of improvement has this single agent comprised in the short compass of fifty years ! Everywhere practicable, everywhere efficient, it has an arm a thousand times stronger than that of Hercules, and to which human ingenuity is capable of fitting a thousand times as many heads as belonged to Briareus. Steam is found in triumphant operation on the seas ; and under the influence of its strong propulsion, the gallant ship

Against the wind, against the tide,  
Still steadies with an upright keel.

It is on the rivers, that the boatman may repose on his oars ; it is in highways, and exerts itself along the courses of land conveyance ; it is at the bottom of mines, a thousand feet below the earth’s surface ; it is in the mill, and in the workshops of the trades. It rows, it pumps, it excavates, it carries, it draws, it lifts, it hammers, it spins, it weaves, it prints. It seems to say to men, at least to the class of artisans, ‘ Leave off your manual labour, give over your bodily toil ; bestow but your skill and reason to the directing of my power, and I will bear the toil—with no muscle to grow weary, no nerve to relax, no breast to feel faintness.’ What further improvements may still be made in the use of this astonishing power it is impossible to know, and it were vain to conjecture. What we do know is, that it has most essentially altered



the face of affairs, and that no visible limit yet appears beyond which its progress is seen to be impossible. If its power were now to be annihilated, if we were to miss it on the water and in the mills, it would seem as if we were going back to rude ages.

## 43

## THE BAROMETER

(DR. ARNOTT, 1788-1874)

GALILEO had found that water would rise under the piston of a pump to a height only of about thirty-four feet. His pupil Torricelli, conceiving the happy thought that the weight of the atmosphere might be the cause of the ascent, concluded that mercury, which is about thirteen times heavier than water, should only rise, under the same influence, to a thirteenth of the elevation—he tried, and found that this was so, and the mercurial barometer was invented. To afford further evidence that the weight of the atmosphere was the cause of the phenomenon, he afterwards carried the tube of mercury to the tops of buildings and of mountains, and found that it fell always in exact proportion to the portion of the atmosphere left below it—and he found that water-pumps in different situations varied as to sucking power, according to the same law.

It was soon afterwards discovered, by careful observation of the mercurial barometer, that even when remaining in the same place, it did not always stand at the same elevation; in other words, that the weight of atmosphere over any particular part of the earth was constantly fluctuating; a truth which, without the barometer,

could never have been suspected. The observation of the instrument being carried still further, it was found that, in serene, dry weather, the mercury generally stood high, and that before and during storms and rain it fell; the instrument, therefore, might serve as a prophet of the weather, becoming a precious monitor to the husbandman or the sailor.

The reasons why the barometer falls before wind and rain will be better understood a few pages hence; but we may remark here, that when water which has been suspended in the atmosphere, and has formed a part of it, separates as rain, the weight and bulk of the mass are diminished; and that wind must occur when a sudden condensation of aeriform matter, in any situation, disturbs the equilibrium of the air, for the air around will rush towards the situation of diminished pressure.

To the husbandman the barometer is of considerable use, by aiding and correcting the prognostics of the weather which he draws from local signs familiar to him; but its great use as a weather-glass seems to be to the mariner, who roams over the whole ocean, and is often under skies and climates altogether new to him. The watchful captain of the present day, trusting to this extraordinary monitor, is frequently enabled to take in sail and to make ready for the storm, where, in former times, the dreadful visitation would have fallen upon him unprepared. The marine barometer has not yet been in general use for many years, and the author was one of a numerous crew who probably owed their preservation to its almost miraculous warning. It was in a southern latitude. The sun had just set with placid appearance, closing a beautiful afternoon, and the usual mirth of the evening watch was proceeding, when the captain's order came to prepare

with all haste for a storm. The barometer had begun to fall with appalling rapidity. As yet, the oldest sailors had not perceived even a threatening in the sky, and were surprised at the extent and hurry of the preparations ; but the required measures were not completed when a more awful hurricane burst upon them than the most experienced had ever braved. Nothing could withstand it ; the sails, already furled and closely bound to the yards, were riven away in tatters ; even the bare yards and masts were in great part disabled ; and at one time the whole rigging had nearly fallen by the board. Such for a few hours was the mingled roar of the hurricane above, of the waves around, and of the incessant peals of thunder, that no human voice could be heard, and amidst the general consternation, even the trumpet sounded in vain. In that awful night, but for the little tube of mercury which had given warning, neither the strength of the noble ship, nor the skill and energies of the commander, could have saved one man to tell the tale. On the following morning the wind was again at rest, but the ship lay upon the yet heaving waves an unsightly wreck.

The marine barometer differs from that used on shore, in having its tube contracted in one place to a very narrow bore, so as to prevent that sudden rising and falling of the mercury which every motion of the ship would else occasion.

Civilized Europe is now familiar with the barometer and its uses, and therefore, that Europeans may conceive the first feelings connected with it, they almost require to witness the astonishment or incredulity with which people of other parts still regard it. A Chinese, once conversing on the subject with the author, could only

imagine of the barometer that it was a gift of miraculous nature, which the God of Christians gave them in pity, to direct them in the long and perilous voyages which they undertook to unknown seas.

A barometer is of great use to persons employed about those mines in which *hydrogen gas* or *fire-damp* is generated and exists in the crevices. When the atmosphere becomes unusually light, the hydrogen, being relieved from a part of the pressure which ordinarily confines it to its holes and lurking-places, expands or issues forth to where it may meet the lamp of the miner, and explode to his destruction. In heavy states of the atmosphere, on the contrary, it is pressed back to its hiding-places, and the miner advances with safety.

We see from this, that any reservoir or vessel containing air would itself answer as a barometer if the only opening to it were through a long tubular neck, containing a close sliding plug, for then, according to the weight and pressure of the external air, the density of that in the cavity would vary, and all changes would be marked by the position of the movable plug. A beautiful barometer has really been made on this principle, by using a vessel of glass, with a long slender neck, in which a globule of mercury is the movable plug.

The state of the atmosphere, as to weight, differs so much at different times in the same situation, as to produce a range of about three inches in the height of the mercurial barometer, that is to say, from twenty-eight to thirty-one inches. On the occasion of the great Lisbon earthquake, however, the mercury fell so far in the barometers, even in Britain, as to disappear from that portion at the top usually left uncovered for observation. The uncovered part of a barometer is commonly of five or

six inches in length, with a divided scale attached to it, on which the figures 28, 29, &c., indicate the number of inches from the surface of the mercury at the bottom to the respective divisions—on the lower part of the scale the words *wind* and *rain* are generally written, meaning that, when the mercury sinks to them, wind and rain are to be expected; and on the upper part, *dry* and *fine* appear, for a corresponding reason; but we have to recollect, that it is not the absolute height of the mercury which indicates the existing or coming weather, but the recent change in its height—a falling barometer usually telling of wind and rain; a rising one of serene and dry weather.

The barometer answers another important purpose, besides that of a *weather-glass*—in enabling us to ascertain readily the height of mountains, or of any situation to which it can be carried.

As the mercurial column in the barometer is always an exact indication of the tension or pressure produced in the air around it by the weight of air above its level, being indeed, as explained in the foregoing paragraphs, of the same weight as a column of the air of equal base with itself, and reaching from it to the top of the atmosphere—the mercury must fall when the instrument is carried from any lower to any higher situation, and the degree of falling must always tell exactly how much air has been left below. For instance, if thirty inches barometrical height mark the whole atmospheric pressure at the surface of the ocean, and if the instrument be found, when carried to some other situation, to stand at only twenty inches, it proves that one-third of the atmosphere exists below the level of the new situation. If our atmospheric ocean were of as uniform density all the way up

as our watery oceans, a certain weight of air thus left behind in ascending would mark everywhere a change of level nearly equal, and the ascertaining any height by the barometer would become one of the most simple of calculations—the air at the surface of the earth being about twelve thousand times lighter than its bulk of mercury, an inch rise or fall of the barometer would mark everywhere a rise or a fall in the atmosphere of twelve thousand inches or one thousand feet. But owing to the elasticity of air, which causes it to increase in volume as it escapes from pressure, the atmosphere is rarer in proportion as we ascend, so that to leave a given weight of it behind, the ascent must be greater, the higher the situation where the experiment is made ; the rule therefore of one inch of mercury for a thousand feet holds only for rough estimates near the surface of the earth. The precise calculation, however, for any case, is still very easy ; and a good barometer, with a thermometer attached, and with tables, or an algebraical formula expressing all the influencing circumstances, enables us to ascertain elevations much more easily, and in many cases more correctly, than by trigonometrical survey.

The weight of the whole atmospherical ocean surrounding the earth being equal to that of a watery ocean of thirty-four feet deep, or of a covering of mercury of thirty inches, and the air found at the surface of the earth being eight hundred and forty times lighter than water, if the same density existed all the way up, the atmosphere would be 34 times 840, or about 28,000 feet high, which is equal to five miles and a half. On account of the greater rarity, however, in the superior regions, it really extends to a height of nearly fifty miles. From the known laws of aerial elasticity, we can deduce what is found to hold

in fact, that one-half of all the air constituting our atmosphere exists within three miles and a half from the earth's surface ; that is to say, under the level of the summit of Mont Blanc. A person, unaccustomed to calculation, would suppose the air to be more equally distributed through the fifty miles than this rule indicates, as he might at first also suppose a tube of two feet diameter to hold only twice as much as a tube of one foot, although in reality it holds four times as much.

In carrying a barometer from the level of the Thames to the top of St. Paul's Church in London, or of Hampstead Hill, the mercury falls about half an inch, marking an ascent of about five hundred feet. On Mont Blanc it falls to half of the entire barometric height, marking an elevation of fifteen thousand feet ; and in Du Luc's famous balloon ascent it fell to below twelve inches, indicating an elevation of twenty-one thousand feet, the greatest to which man has ever ascended from the surface of his earthly habitation.

The extreme rarity of the air on high mountains must of course affect animals. A person breathing on the summit of Mont Blanc, although expanding his chest as much as usual, really takes in at each inspiration only half as much air as he does below,—exhibiting a contrast to a man in a diving-bell, who at thirty-four feet under water is breathing air of double density, at sixty-eight feet of triple, and so on. It is known that travellers, and even their practised guides, often fall down suddenly as if struck by lightning, when approaching lofty summits, on account chiefly of the thinness of the air which they are breathing, and some minutes elapse before they recover. In the elevated plains of South America the inhabitants have larger chests than the inhabitants of lower regions—

another admirable instance of the animal frame adapting itself to the circumstances in which it is placed. It appears from all this, that although our atmosphere be fifty miles high, it is so thin beyond three miles and a half, that mountain ridges of greater elevation are nearly as effectual barriers between nations of men, as islands or rocky ridges in the sea are between the firny tribes inhabiting the opposite coasts.

## 44

## THE CHIMNEY-SWALLOW

(GILBERT WHITE, 1720-93)

THE house-swallow, or chimney-swallow, is, undoubtedly, the first comer of all the British *hirundines*, and appears in general on or about April 13, as I have remarked from many years' observation. Not but now and then a straggler is seen much earlier ; and, in particular, when I was a boy, I observed a swallow for a whole day together, on a sunny warm Shrove Tuesday ; which day could not fall out later than the middle of March, and often happened early in February.

It was worth remarking, that these birds are seen first about lakes and mill-ponds ; and it is also very particular, that if these early visitors happen to find frost and snow, as was the case of the two dreadful springs of 1770 and 1771, they immediately withdraw for a time—a circumstance this, much more in favour of hiding than migration ; since it is much more probable that a bird should retire to its hybernaculum, just at hand, than return for a week or two only to warmer latitudes.

The swallow, though called the chimney-swallow, by



no means builds altogether in chimneys, but often within barns and out-houses against the rafters, and so she did in Virgil's time :

*Ante*  
*Garrula quam tignis nidum suspendat hirundo.*

In Sweden, she builds in barns, and is called *ladu swala*, the barn-swallow. Besides, in the warmer parts of Europe there are no chimneys to houses, except they are *English-built* ; in these countries she constructs her nest in porches, and gateways, and galleries, and open halls.

Here and there a bird may affect some odd peculiar place ; as we have known a swallow build down the shaft of an old well, through which chalk had been formerly drawn up for the purpose of manure ; but, in general, with us the *hirundo* breeds in chimneys, and loves to haunt those stalks where there is a constant fire, no doubt for the sake of warmth. Not that it can subsist in the immediate shaft where there is a fire ; but prefers one adjoining to that of the kitchen, and disregards the perpetual smoke of that funnel, as I have often observed with some degree of wonder.

Five or six or more feet down the chimney does this little bird begin to form her nest about the middle of May, which consists, like that of the house-martin, of a crust or shell composed of dirt or mud, mixed with short pieces of straw, to render it tough and permanent ; with this difference, that whereas the shell of the martin is nearly hemispheric, that of the swallow is open at the top, and like half a deep dish : this nest is lined with fine grasses and feathers, which are often collected as they float in the air.

Wonderful is the address which this adroit bird shows

all day long in ascending and descending, with security, through so narrow a pass. When hovering over the mouth of the funnel, the vibrations of her wings acting on the confined air occasion a rumbling like thunder. It is not improbable that the dam submits to this inconvenient situation so low in the shaft, in order to secure her broods from rapacious birds, and particularly from owls, which frequently fall down chimneys, perhaps in attempting to get at these nestlings.

The swallow lays from four to six white eggs, dotted with red specks, and brings out her first brood about the last week in June, or the first week in July. The progressive method by which the young are introduced into life is very amusing; first they emerge from the shaft with difficulty enough, and often fall down into the rooms below: for a day or so they are fed on the chimney-top, and then are conducted to the dead leafless bough of some tree, where, sitting in a row, they are attended with great assiduity, and may then be called *perchers*. In a day or two more they become *flyers*, but are still unable to take their own food; therefore they play about near the place where the dams are hawking for flies; and when a mouthful is collected, at a certain signal given, the dam and the nestling advance, rising towards each other, and meeting at an angle; the young one all the while uttering such a little quick note of gratitude and complacency, that a person must have paid very little regard to the wonders of nature that has not often remarked this feat.

The dam betakes herself immediately to the business of a second brood as soon as she is disengaged from the first; which at once associates with the first broods of house-martins; and with them congregates, clustering

on sunny roofs, towers, and trees. This *hirundo* brings out her second brood towards the middle and end of August.

All the summer long is the swallow a most instructive pattern of unwearied industry and affection ; for, from morning to night, while there is a family to be supported, she spends the whole day in skimming close to the ground, and exerting the most sudden turns and quick evolutions. Avenues, and long walks under hedges, and pasture-fields, and mown meadows where cattle graze, are her delight, especially if there are trees interspersed ; because in such spots insects most abound. When a fly is taken, a smart snap from her bill is heard, resembling the noise at the shutting of a watch-case ; but the motion of the mandibles is too quick for the eye.

The swallow, probably the male bird, is the *excubitor*<sup>1</sup> to house-martins, and other little birds, announcing the approach of birds of prey. For, as soon as a hawk appears, with a shrill alarming note he calls all the swallows and martins about him, who pursue in a body, and buffet and strike their enemy till they have driven him from the village, darting down from above on his back, and rising in a perpendicular line in perfect security. This bird also will sound the alarm, and strike at cats when they climb on the roofs of houses, or otherwise approach the nests. Each species of *hirundo* drinks as it flies along, sipping the surface of the water ; but the swallow alone, in general, *washes* on the wing, by dropping into a pool for many times together : in very hot weather house-martins and bank-martins dip and wash a little.

The swallow is a delicate songster, and in soft sunny weather sings both perching and flying ; on trees in a kind of concert, and on chimney-tops : is also a bold

<sup>1</sup> Sentinel.

flyer, ranging to distant downs and commons, even in windy weather, which the other species seem much to dislike ; nay, even frequenting exposed seaport towns, and making little excursions over the salt water. Horsemen on wide downs are often closely attended by a little party of swallows for miles together, which play before and behind them, sweeping around, and collecting all the skulking insects that are roused by the trampling of the horses' feet ; when the wind blows hard, without this expedient, they are often forced to settle to pick up their lurking prey.

This species feeds much on little *coleoptera*, as well as on gnats and flies ; and often settles on dug ground, or paths, for gravel to grind and digest its food. Before they depart, for some weeks, to a bird, they forsake houses and chimneys, and roost in trees, and usually withdraw about the beginning of October ; though some few stragglers may appear on, at times, till the first week in November.

## 45

## EARLY TRAVELLING

(RICHARD STEELE, 1671-1729)

MR. SPECTATOR,

A lady of my acquaintance, for whom I have too much respect to be easy while she is doing an indiscreet action, has given occasion to this trouble : she is a widow, to whom the indulgence of a tender husband has entrusted the management of a very great fortune, and a son about sixteen, both which she is extremely fond of. The boy has parts of the middle size, neither shining nor despicable, and has passed the common exercises of his years with

tolerable advantage ; but is withal what you would call a forward youth : by the help of this last qualification, which serves as a varnish to all the rest, he is enabled to make the best use of his learning, and display it at full length upon all occasions. Last summer he distinguished himself two or three times very remarkably, by puzzling the vicar before an assembly of most of the ladies in the neighbourhood ; and from such weighty considerations as these, as it too often unfortunately falls out, the mother is become invincibly persuaded that her son is a great scholar ; and that to chain him down to the ordinary methods of education with others of his age, would be to cramp his faculties, and do an irreparable injury to his wonderful capacity.

I happened to visit at the house last week, and missing the young gentleman at the tea-table, where he seldom fails to officiate, could not upon so extraordinary a circumstance avoid inquiring after him. My lady told me, he was gone out with her woman, in order to make some preparations for their equipage ; for that she intended very speedily to carry him to travel. The oddness of the expression shocked me a little ; however, I soon recovered myself enough to let her know, that all I was willing to understand by it was, that she designed this summer to show her son his estate in a distant county, in which he has never yet been ; but she soon took care to rob me of that agreeable mistake, and let me into the whole affair. She enlarged upon young master's prodigious improvements, and his comprehensive knowledge of all book learning ; concluding that it was now high time he should be made acquainted with men and things ; that she had resolved he should make the tour of France and Italy, but could not bear to have

him out of her sight, and therefore intended to go along with him.

I was going to rally her for so extravagant a resolution, but found myself not in fit humour to meddle with a subject that demanded the most soft and delicate touch imaginable. I was afraid of dropping something that might seem to bear hard either upon the son's abilities, or the mother's discretion; being sensible that in both these cases, though supported with all the powers of reason, I should, instead of gaining her ladyship over to my opinion, only expose myself to her disesteem; I therefore immediately determined to refer the whole matter to the *Spectator*.

When I came to reflect at night, as my custom is, upon the occurrences of the day, I could not but believe that this humour of carrying a boy to travel in his mother's lap, and that upon pretence of learning men and things, is a case of an extraordinary nature, and carries on it a particular stamp of folly. I did not remember to have met with its parallel within the compass of my observation, though I could call to mind some not extremely unlike it: from hence my thoughts took occasion to ramble into the general notion of travelling, as it is now made a part of education. Nothing is more frequent than to take a lad from grammar and taw<sup>1</sup>, and, under the tuition of some poor scholar, who is willing to be banished for thirty pounds a year, and a little victuals, send him crying and snivelling into foreign countries. Thus he spends his time as children do at puppet shows, and with much the same advantage, in staring and gaping at an amazing variety of strange things; strange indeed to one that is not prepared to comprehend the reasons and mean-

<sup>1</sup> Marbles.

ing of them ; whilst he should be laying the solid foundations of knowledge in his mind, and furnishing it with just rules to direct his future progress in life under some skilful master of the art of instruction.

Can there be a more astonishing thought in nature than to consider how men should fall into so palpable a mistake ? It is a large field, and may very well exercise a sprightly genius ; but I don't remember you have yet taken a turn in it. I wish, sir, you would make people understand that travel is really the last step to be taken in the institution<sup>1</sup> of youth, and that to set out with it is to begin where they should end.

Certainly the true end of visiting foreign parts is to look into their customs and policies, and observe in what particulars they excel or come short of our own ; to unlearn some odd peculiarities in our manners, and wear off such awkward stiffnesses and affectations in our behaviour as may possibly have been contracted from constantly associating with one nation of men, by a more free, general, and mixed conversation. But how can any of these advantages be attained by one who is a mere stranger to the customs and policies of his native country, and has not yet fixed in his mind the first principles of manners and behaviour ? To endeavour it is to build a gaudy structure without any foundation ; or, if I may be allowed the expression, to work a rich embroidery upon a cobweb.

Another end of travelling, which deserves to be considered, is the improving our taste of the best authors of antiquity, by seeing the places where they lived, and of which they wrote ; to compare the natural face of the country with the descriptions they have given us, and observe how well the picture agrees with the original.

<sup>1</sup> Training.

This must certainly be a most charming exercise to the mind that is rightly turned for it ; besides that it may in a good measure be made subservient to morality, if the person is capable of drawing just conclusions concerning the uncertainty of human things, from the ruinous alterations time and barbarity have brought upon so many palaces, cities, and whole countries, which make the most illustrious figures in history. And this hint may be not a little improved by examining every spot of ground that we find celebrated as the scene of some famous action, or retaining any footsteps of a Cato, Cicero, or Brutus, or some such great virtuous man. A nearer view of any such particular, though really little and trifling in itself, may serve the more powerfully to warm a generous mind to an emulation of their virtues, and a greater ardency of ambition to imitate their bright examples, if it comes duly tempered and prepared for the impression. But this I believe you will hardly think those to be, who are so far from entering into the sense and spirit of the ancients, that they don't yet understand their language with any exactness.

But I have wandered from my purpose, which was only to desire you to save, if possible, a fond English mother, and mother's own son, from being shown a ridiculous spectacle through the most polite part of Europe. Pray, tell them, that though to be seasick, or jumbled in an outlandish stage coach, may perhaps be healthful for the constitution of the body, yet it is apt to cause such a dizziness in young empty heads as too often lasts their lifetime.

I am, Sir,

Your most humble servant,

PHILIP HOMEBRED.



## OF AGRICULTURE

(ABRAHAM COWLEY, 1618-67)

THE first wish of Virgil (as you will find anon by his verses) was to be a good philosopher; the second, a good husbandman: and God (whom he seemed to understand better than most of the most learned heathens) dealt with him just as he did with Solomon; because he prayed for wisdom in the first place, he added all things else which were subordinately to be desired. He made him one of the best philosophers, and the best husbandmen, and, to adorn and communicate both those faculties, the best poet. He made him, besides all this, a rich man, and a man who desired to be no richer:

*O fortunatos nimium, sua si bona norint!*

To be a husbandman is but a retreat from the city; to be a philosopher, from the world; or rather, a retreat from the world as it is man's, into the world as it is God's.

But since nature denies to most men the capacity or appetite, and fortune allows but to a very few the opportunities or possibility of applying themselves wholly to philosophy, the best mixture of human affairs that we can make are the employments of a country life. It is, as Columella calls it, *Res sine dubitatione proxima, et quasi consanguinea sapientiae*, the nearest neighbour, or rather next in kindred, to philosophy. Varro says, the principles of it are the same which Ennius made to be the principles of all nature—Earth, Water, Air, and the Sun. It does certainly comprehend more parts of philosophy than any one profession, art, or science in the world besides: and therefore Cicero says, the pleasures

of a husbandman *mihi ad sapientis vitam proxime videntur accedere*, come very nigh to those of a philosopher. There is no other sort of life that affords so many branches of praise to a panegyrist<sup>1</sup>: the utility of it to a man's self; the usefulness or rather necessity of it to all the rest of mankind; the innocence, the pleasure, the antiquity, the dignity.

The utility (I mean plainly the lucre<sup>2</sup> of it) is not so great now in our nation as arises from merchandise and the trading of the city, from whence many of the best estates and chief honours of the kingdom are derived. We have no men now fetched from the plough to be made lords, as they were in Rome to be made consuls and dictators; the reason of which I conceive to be from an evil custom, now grown as strong among us as if it were a law, which is, that no men put their children to be bred up apprentices in agriculture, as in other trades, but such who are so poor, that, when they come to be men, they have not wherewithal to set up in it, and so can only farm some small parcel of ground, the rent of which devours all but the bare subsistence of the tenant: whilst they who are proprietors of the land are either too proud, or, for want of that kind of education, too ignorant, to improve their estates, though the means of doing it be as easy and certain in this as in any other track of commerce. If there were always two or three thousand youths, for seven or eight years bound to this profession, that they might learn the whole art of it, and afterwards be enabled to be masters in it, by a moderate stock; I cannot doubt but that we should see as many aldermen's estates made in the country, as now we do out of all kind of merchandizing in the city. There are as many

<sup>1</sup> One who sets out to praise.

<sup>2</sup> Gain, profit.

ways to be rich, and which is better, there is no possibility to be poor, without such negligence as can neither have excuse nor pity ; for a little ground will, without question, feed a little family, and the superfluities of life (which are now in some cases by custom made almost necessary) must be supplied out of the superabundance of art and industry, or contemned by as great a degree of philosophy.

As for the necessity of this art, it is evident enough, since this can live without all others, and no one other without this. This is like speech, without which the society of men cannot be preserved ; the others, like figures and tropes of speech, which serve only to adorn it. Many nations have lived, and some do still, without any art but this ; not so elegantly, I confess, but still they live ; and almost all the other arts which are here practised are beholding <sup>1</sup> to this for most of their materials.

The innocence of this life is the next thing for which I commend it ; and if husbandmen preserve not that they are much to blame, for no men are so free from the temptations of iniquity. They live by what they can get by industry from the earth, and others by what they can catch by craft from men. They live upon an estate given them by their mother, and others upon an estate cheated from their brethren. They live, like sheep and kine, by the allowances of nature ; and others, like wolves and foxes, by the acquisitions of rapine. And I hope I may affirm, without any offence to the great, that sheep and kine are very useful, and that wolves and foxes are pernicious creatures. They are, without dispute, of all men the most quiet and least apt to be inflamed to the disturbance of the commonwealth : their manner of life inclines them, and interest binds them, to love peace :

<sup>1</sup> Indebted.

in our late mad and miserable civil wars, all other trades, even to the meanest, set forth whole troops, and raised up some great commanders, who became famous and mighty for the mischiefs they had done ; but I do not remember the name of any one husbandman who had so considerable a share in the twenty years' ruin of his country as to deserve the curses of his countrymen.

And if great delights be joined with so much innocence, I think it is ill done of men not to take them here where they are so tame, and ready at hand, rather than hunt for them in courts and cities where they are so wild, and the chase so troublesome and dangerous.

We are here among the vast and noble scenes of nature ; we are there among the pitiful shifts of policy : we walk here in the light and open ways of the divine bounty ; we grope there in the dark and confused labyrinths of human malice : our senses are here feasted with the clear and genuine taste of their objects, which are all sophisticated there, and for the most part overwhelmed with their contraries. Here pleasure looks, methinks, like a beautiful, constant, and modest wife ; it is there an impudent, fickle, and painted harlot. Here is harmless and cheap plenty ; there guilty and expensive luxury.

I shall only instance in one delight more, the most natural and best-natured of all others, a perpetual companion of the husbandman ; and that is, the satisfaction of looking round about him, and seeing nothing but the effects and improvements of his own art and diligence ; to be always gathering of some fruits of it, and at the same time to behold others ripening and others budding ; to see all his fields and gardens covered with the beauteous creatures of his own industry ; and to see, like God, that all his works are good.

*Hinc atque hinc glomerantur Oreades ;<sup>1</sup> ipsi  
Agricolae tacitum pertendant gaudia pectus.*

On his heart-strings a secret joy doth strike.

The antiquity of his art is certainly not to be contested by any other. The three first men in the world were a gardener, a ploughman, and a grazier, and if any man object that the second of these was a murderer, I desire he would consider, that as soon as he was so, he quitted our profession and turned builder. It is for this reason, I suppose, that Ecclesiasticus forbids us to hate husbandry ; because, says he, the Most High has created it. We were all born to this art, and taught by nature to nourish our bodies by the same earth out of which they were made, and to which they must return, and pay at last for their sustenance.

Behold the original and primitive nobility of all those great persons, who are too proud now, not only to till the ground, but almost to tread upon it. We may talk what we please of lilies, and lions rampant, and spread-eagles in fields d'or or d'argent ; but if heraldry were guided by reason, a plough in a field arable would be the most noble and ancient arms.

All these considerations make me fall into the wonder and complaint of Columella, how it should come to pass that all arts or sciences (for the dispute, which is an art, and which a science, does not belong to the curiosity of us husbandmen), metaphysic, physic, morality, mathematics, logic, rhetoric, &c., which are all, I grant, good and useful faculties (except only metaphysic, which I do not know whether it be anything or no) ; but even vaulting, fencing, dancing, attiring, cookery, carving, and such-like vanities, should all have public schools and

<sup>1</sup> On either side the nymphs are gathering.

masters, and yet that we should never see or hear of any man who took upon him the profession of teaching this so pleasant, so virtuous, so profitable, so honourable, so necessary art.

A man would think, when he's in serious humour, that it were but a vain, irrational, and ridiculous thing for a great company of men and women to run up and down in a room together, in a hundred several postures and figures, to no purpose, and with no design ; and therefore dancing was invented first, and only practised anciently, in the ceremonies of the heathen religion, which consisted all in mummerly and madness ; the latter being the chief glory of the worship, and accounted divine inspiration : this, I say, a severe man would think, though I dare not determine so far against so customary a part now of good breeding. And yet, who is there among our gentry that does not entertain a dancing-master for his children as soon as they are able to walk ? But did ever any father provide a tutor for his son to instruct him betimes in the nature and improvements of that land which he intended to leave him ? That is at least a superfluity, and this a defect, in our manner of education ; and therefore I could wish (but cannot in these times much hope to see it) that one college in each university were erected and appropriated to this study, as well as there are to medicine and the civil law. There would be no need of making a body of scholars and fellows, with certain endowments, as in other colleges ; it would suffice if, after the manner of halls in Oxford, there were only four professors constituted (for it would be too much work for only one master, or principal, as they call him there) to teach these four parts of it : First, Aration<sup>1</sup>, and all

<sup>1</sup> Ploughing.

things relating to it. Secondly, Pasturage. Thirdly, Gardens, Orchards, Vineyards, and Woods. Fourthly, all parts of Rural Economy, which would contain the government of Bees, Swine, Poultry, Decoys, Ponds, &c., and all that which Varro calls *villaticas pastiones*,<sup>1</sup> together with the sports of the field (which ought to be looked upon not only as pleasures, but as parts of housekeeping), and the domestical conservation and uses of all that is brought in by industry abroad. The business of these professors should not be, as is commonly practised in other arts, only to read pompous and superficial lectures, out of Virgil's *Georgics*, Pliny, Varro, or Columella; but to instruct their pupils in the whole method and course of this study, which might be run through, perhaps, with diligence in a year or two: and the continual succession of scholars, upon a moderate taxation for their diet, lodging, and learning, would be a sufficient constant revenue for maintenance of the house and the professors, who should be men not chosen for the ostentation of critical literature, but for solid and experimental knowledge of the things they teach; such men, so industrious and public-spirited as I conceive Mr. Hartlib to be, if the gentleman be yet alive. But it is needless to speak further of my thoughts of this design, unless the present disposition of the age allowed more probability of bringing it into execution. What I have further to say of the country life shall be borrowed from the poets, who were always the most faithful and affectionate friends to it. Poetry was born among the shepherds.

*Nescio qua natale solum dulcedine Musas  
Ducit, et immemores non sinit esse sui.*

<sup>1</sup> Country-house live stock.

The Muses still love their own native place,  
'T has secret charms which nothing can deface.

The truth is, no other place is proper for their work ;  
one might as well undertake to dance in a crowd as to  
make good verses in the midst of noise and tumult.

As well might corn as verse in cities grow :  
In vain the thankless glebe we plough and sow ;  
Against th' unnatural soil in vain we strive :  
'Tis not a ground in which these plants will thrive.

It will bear nothing but the nettles or thorns of satire,  
which grow most naturally in the worst earth ; and  
therefore almost all poets, except those who were not  
able to eat bread without the bounty of great men,  
that is, without what they could get by flattering of  
them, have not only withdrawn themselves from the  
vices and vanities of the grand world,

*pariter vitiisque iocisque*  
*Altius humanis exseruere caput,*<sup>1</sup>

into the innocent happiness of a retired life ; but have  
commended and adorned nothing so much by their ever-  
living poems. Hesiod was the first or second poet in the  
world that remains yet extant (if Homer, as some think,  
preceded him, but I rather believe they were contem-  
poraries), and he is the first writer too of the art of  
husbandry. He has contributed, says Columella, not a  
little to our profession ; I suppose he means not a little  
honour, for the matter of his instructions is not very  
important : his great antiquity is visible through the  
gravity and simplicity of his style. The most acute of  
all his sayings concerns our purpose very much, and is  
couched in the reverend obscurity of an oracle. Πλέον

<sup>1</sup> Have lifted the head above human faults and jests.



ἡμῖν παντός, The half is more than the whole. The occasion of the speech is this : his brother Perses had, by corrupting some great men (*βασιλῆας δωροφάγους*, great bribe-eaters he calls them), gotten from him the half of his estate. It is no matter, says he, they have not done me so much prejudice as they imagine :

Νήπιον, οὐδ' ἴσασιν ὅσῳ πλέον ἡμῖν παντός,  
Οὐδ' ὅσον ἐν μαλάχῃ τε καὶ ἀσφοδέλῳ μέγ' ὄνειαρ,  
Κρύψαντες γὰρ ἔχουσι Θεοὶ βίον ἀνθρώποισι.

Unhappy they to whom God has not reveal'd,  
By a strong light which must their sense control,  
That half a great estate 's more than the whole :  
Unhappy, from whom still conceal'd does lie,  
Of roots and herbs, the wholesome luxury.

This I conceive to have been honest Hesiod's meaning. From Homer we must not expect much concerning our affairs. He was blind, and could neither work in the country nor enjoy the pleasures of it ; his helpless poverty was likeliest to be sustained in the richest places ; he was to delight the Grecians with fine tales of the wars and adventures of their ancestors ; his subject removed him from all commerce with us, and yet, methinks, he made a shift to show his goodwill a little. For, though he could do us no honour in the person of his hero Ulysses (much less of Achilles), because his whole time was consumed in wars and voyages, yet he makes his father Laertes a gardener all that while, and seeking his consolation for the absence of his son in the pleasure of planting and even dunging his own grounds. You see, he did not condemn us peasants ; nay, so far was he from that insolence, that he always styles Eumæus, who kept the hogs, with wonderful respect, *δῖον ὑφορβόν*, the divine swine-herd ; he could have done no more for

Menelaus or Agamemnon. And Theocritus (a very ancient poet, but he was one of our own tribe, for he wrote nothing but pastorals) gave the same epithet to an husbandman,

*ἡμεῖς βετο δῖος ἀγρότης.*

The divine husbandman replied to Hercules, who was but δῖος himself. These were civil Greeks, and who understood the dignity of our calling! Among the Romans we have, in the first place, our truly divine Virgil, who, though by the favour of Maecenas and Augustus he might have been one of the chief men of Rome, yet chose rather to employ much of his time in the exercise, and much of his immortal wit in the praise and instructions of a rustic life; who, though he had written before whole books of pastorals and georgics, could not abstain, in his great and imperial poem, from describing Evander, one of his best princes, as living just after the homely manner of an ordinary countryman. He seats him on a throne of maple, and lays him but upon a bear's skin; the kine and oxen are lowing in his courtyard; the birds under the eaves of his window call him up in the morning; and when he goes abroad, only two dogs go along with him for his guard: at last, when he brings Aeneas into his royal cottage, he makes him say this memorable compliment, greater than ever yet was spoken at the Escorial, the Louvre, or our Whitehall:

*Haec (inquit) limina victor*

*Alcides subiit, haec illum regia cepit:*

*Aude, hospes, contemnere opes: et te quoque dignum*

*Finge Deo, rebusque veni non asper egenis.*

This humble roof, this rustic court, said he,

Receiv'd Alcides, crown'd with victory:

Scorn not, great guest, the steps where he has trod;

But contemn wealth, and imitate a God.

The next man whom we are much obliged to, both for his doctrine and example, is the next best poet in the world to Virgil, his dear friend Horace, who when Augustus had desired Maecenas to persuade him to come and live domestically and at the same table with him, and to be secretary of state of the whole world under him, or rather jointly with him, for he says, *ut nos in epistolis scribendis adiuvet*, could not be tempted to forsake his Sabine, or Tiburtine manor, for so rich and so glorious a trouble. There was never, I think, such an example as this in the world, that he should have so much moderation and courage as to refuse an offer of such greatness, and the emperor so much generosity and good-nature as not to be at all offended with his refusal, but to retain still the same kindness, and express it often to him in most friendly and familiar letters, part of which are still extant. If I should produce all the passages of this excellent author upon the several subjects which I treat of in this book, I must be obliged to translate half his works; of which I may say more truly than, in my opinion, he did of Homer,

*Qui, quid sit pulchrum, quid turpe, quid utile, quid non,  
Plinius et melius Chrysippo et Crantore dicit.*

I shall content myself upon this particular theme with three only, one out of his *Odes*, the other out of his *Satires*, the third out of his *Epistles*; and shall forbear to collect the suffrages of all other poets, which may be found scattered up and down through all their writings, and especially in Martial's. But I must not omit to make some excuse for the bold undertaking of my own unskilful pencil upon the beauties of a face that has been drawn before by so many great masters; especially, that I

should dare to do it in Latin verses (though of another kind), and have the confidence to translate them. I can only say that I love the matter, and that ought to cover many faults ; and that I run not to contend with those before me, but follow to applaud them <sup>1</sup>.

## 47

## TRADE JEALOUSY

(DAVID HUME, 1711-76)

NOTHING is more usual among states which have made some advances in commerce, than to look on the progress of their neighbours with a suspicious eye, to consider all trading states as their rivals, and to suppose that it is impossible for any of them to flourish, but at their expense. In opposition to this narrow and malignant opinion, I will venture to assert, that the increase of riches and commerce in any one nation, instead of hurting, commonly promotes the riches and commerce of all its neighbours ; and that a state can scarcely carry its trade and industry very far where all the surrounding states are buried in ignorance, sloth, and barbarism.

It is obvious, that the domestic industry of a people cannot be hurt by the greatest prosperity of their neighbours ; and as this branch of commerce is undoubtedly the most important in any extensive kingdom, we are so far removed from all reason of jealousy. But I go farther, and observe, that when an open communication is preserved among nations, it is impossible but the domestic industry of every one must receive an increase

<sup>1</sup> Cowley proceeds to adapt in English rhyming couplets the following passages : Virgil, *Georgics* II. 458-526 ; Horace, *Epodes* II, *Satires* II. 6, 19-117, *Epistles*, I. 10.

from the improvements of the others. Compare the situation of Great Britain at present with what it was two centuries ago. All the arts, both of agriculture and manufactures, were then extremely rude and imperfect. Every improvement which we have since made has arisen from our imitation of foreigners ; and we ought so far to esteem it happy, that they had previously made advances in arts and ingenuity. But this intercourse is still upheld to our great advantage ; notwithstanding the advanced state of our manufactures, we daily adopt, in every art, the inventions and improvements of our neighbours. The commodity is first imported from abroad, to our great discontent, while we imagine that it drains us of our money ; afterwards, the art itself is gradually imported, to our visible advantage ; yet we continue still to repine, that our neighbours should possess any art, industry, and invention ; forgetting that had they not first instructed us, we should have been at present barbarians ; and did they not still continue their instructions, the arts must fall into a state of languor, and lose that emulation and novelty which contribute so much to their advancement.

The increase of domestic industry lays the foundation of foreign commerce. Where a great number of commodities are raised and perfected for the home-market, there will always be found some which can be exported with advantage. But if our neighbours have no art or cultivation, they cannot take them ; because they will have nothing to give in exchange. In this respect states are in the same condition as individuals. A single man can scarcely be industrious where all his fellow citizens are idle. The riches of the several members of a community contribute to increase my riches, whatever pro-

fession I may follow. They consume the produce of my industry, and afford me the produce of theirs in return.

Nor need any state entertain apprehensions that their neighbours will improve to such a degree in every art and manufacture as to have no demand from them. Nature, by giving a diversity of geniuses, climates, and soils to different nations, has secured their mutual intercourse and commerce, as long as they all remain industrious and civilized. Nay, the more the arts increase in any state, the more will be its demands from its industrious neighbours. The inhabitants, having become opulent and skilful, desire to have every commodity in the utmost perfection; and as they have plenty of commodities to give in exchange, they make large importations from every foreign country. The industry of the nations from whom they import receives encouragement; their own is also increased by the sale of the commodities which they give in exchange.

But what if a nation has any staple<sup>1</sup> commodity, such as the woollen manufacture is in England? Must not the interfering of our neighbours in that manufacture be a loss to us? I answer, that when any commodity is denominated the staple of a kingdom, it is supposed that this kingdom has some peculiar and natural advantages for raising the commodity; and if, notwithstanding these advantages, they lose such a manufacture, they ought to blame their own idleness or bad government, not the industry of their neighbours. It ought also to be considered, that by the increase of industry among the neighbouring nations, the consumption of every particular species of commodity is also increased; and though foreign manufactures interfere with them in the market,

<sup>1</sup> Principal.

the demand for their product may still continue, or even increase ; and should it diminish, ought the consequence to be esteemed so fatal ? If the spirit of industry be preserved, it may easily be diverted from one branch to another ; and the manufactures of wool, for instance, be employed in linen, silk, iron, or any other commodities for which there appears to be a demand. We need not apprehend that all the objects of industry will be exhausted, or that our manufacturers, while they remain on an equal footing with those of our neighbours, will be in danger of wanting employment. The emulation among rival nations serves rather to keep industry alive in all of them ; and any people is happier who possess a variety of manufactures than if they enjoyed one single great manufacture, in which they are all employed. Their situation is less precarious, and they will feel less sensibly those revolutions and uncertainties to which every particular branch of commerce will always be exposed.

The only commercial state that ought to dread the improvements and industry of their neighbours, is such a one as the Dutch, who, enjoying no extent of land, nor possessing any number of native commodities, flourish only by their being the brokers and factors and carriers of others. Such a people may naturally apprehend, that as soon as the neighbouring states come to know and pursue their interest, they will take into their own hands the management of their affairs, and deprive their brokers of that profit which they formerly reaped from it. But though this consequence may naturally be dreaded, it is very long before it takes place ; and by art and industry it may be warded off for many generations, if not wholly eluded. The advantage of superior stocks and correspondence is so great, that it is not easily overcome ;

and as all the transactions increase by the increase of industry in the neighbouring states, even a people whose commerce stands on this precarious basis may at first reap a considerable profit from the flourishing condition of their neighbours. The Dutch, having mortgaged all their revenues, make not such a figure in political transactions as formerly ; but their commerce is surely equal to what it was in the middle of the last century, when they were reckoned among the great powers of Europe.

Were our narrow and malignant politics to meet with success, we should reduce all our neighbouring nations to the same state of sloth and ignorance that prevails in Morocco and the coast of Barbary. But what would be the consequence ? They could send us no commodities ; they could take none from us ; our domestic commerce itself would languish for want of emulation, example, and instruction ; and we ourselves should soon fall into the same abject condition to which we had reduced them. I shall therefore venture to acknowledge that, not only as a man, but as a British subject, I pray for the flourishing commerce of Germany, Spain, Italy, and even France itself. I am at least certain that Great Britain, and all those nations, would flourish more, did their sovereigns and ministers adopt such enlarged and benevolent sentiments towards each other.

## 48

## THE NECESSARIES OF LIFE

(DAVID THOREAU, 1817-62)

It would be some advantage to live a primitive and frontier life, though in the midst of an outward civilization, if only to learn what are the gross necessities of life



and what methods have been taken to obtain them ; or even to look over the old day-books of the merchants, to see what it was that the men most commonly bought at the stores, what they stored, that is, what are the grossest groceries. For the improvements of ages have had but little influence on the essential laws of man's existence : as our skeletons, probably, are not to be distinguished from those of our ancestors.

By the words, *necessary of life*, I mean whatever, of all that man obtains by his own exertions, has been from the first, or from long use has become, so important to human life that few, if any, whether from savageness, or poverty, or philosophy, ever attempt to do without it. To many creatures there is in this sense but one necessary of life—Food. To the bison of the prairie it is a few inches of palatable grass, with water to drink ; unless he seeks the Shelter of the forest or the mountain's shadow. None of the brute creation requires more than Food and Shelter. The necessities of life for man in this climate may, accurately enough, be distributed under the several heads of Food, Shelter, Clothing, and Fuel ; for not till we have secured these are we prepared to entertain the true problems of life with freedom and a prospect of success. Man has invented, not only houses, but clothes and cooked food ; and possibly from the accidental discovery of the warmth of fire, and the consequent use of it, at first a luxury, arose the present necessity to sit by it. We observe cats and dogs acquiring the same second nature. By proper Shelter and Clothing we legitimately retain our own internal heat ; but with an excess of these, or of Fuel, that is, with an external heat greater than our own internal, may not cookery properly be said to begin ? Darwin, the naturalist, says of the

inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego, that while his own party, who were well clothed, and sitting close to a fire, were far from too warm, these naked savages, who were farther off, were observed, to his great surprise, 'to be streaming with perspiration at undergoing such a roasting'. So, we are told, the New Hollander goes naked with impunity, while the European shivers in his clothes. Is it impossible to combine the hardness of these savages with the intellectualness of the civilized man? According to Liebig, man's body is a stove, and food the fuel which keeps up the internal combustion in the lungs. In cold weather we eat more, in warm less. The animal heat is the result of a slow combustion, and disease and death take place when this is too rapid; or for want of fuel, or from some defect in the draught, the fire goes out. Of course the vital heat is not to be confounded with fire; but so much for analogy. It appears, therefore, from the above list, that the expression, *animal life*, is nearly synonymous with the expression, *animal heat*; for while Food may be regarded as the Fuel which keeps up the fire within us—and Fuel serves only to prepare that Food or to increase the warmth of our bodies by addition from without—Shelter and Clothing also serve only to retain the *heat* thus generated and absorbed.

The grand necessity, then, for our bodies, is to keep warm, to keep the vital heat in us. What pains we accordingly take, not only with our Food, and Clothing, and Shelter, but with our beds, which are our night-clothes, robbing the nests and breasts of birds to prepare this shelter within a shelter, as the mole has its bed of grass and leaves at the end of its burrow! The poor man is wont to complain that this is a cold world; and to cold, no less physical than social, we refer directly a great

part of our ills. The summer, in some climates, makes possible to man a sort of Elysian life. Fuel, except to cook his Food, is then unnecessary ; the sun is his fire, and many of the fruits are sufficiently cooked by its rays ; while Food generally is more various, and more easily obtained, and Clothing and Shelter are wholly or half unnecessary. At the present day, and in this country, as I find bŷ my own experience, a few implements, a knife, an axe, a spade, a wheelbarrow, &c., and for the studious, lamplight, stationery, and access to a few books, rank next to necessities, and can all be obtained at a trifling cost. Yet some, not wise, go to the other side of the globe, to barbarous and unhealthy regions, and devote themselves to trade for ten or twenty years, in order that they may live—that is, keep comfortably warm—and die in New England at last. The luxuriously rich are not simply kept comfortably warm, but unnaturally hot ; as I implied before, they are cooked, of course *à la mode*.

Most of the luxuries, and many of the so-called comforts of life, are not only not indispensable, but positive hindrances to the elevation of mankind. With respect to luxuries and comforts, the wisest have ever lived a more simple and meagre life than the poor. The ancient philosophers, Chinese, Hindoo, Persian, and Greek, were a class than which none has been poorer in outward riches, none so rich in inward. We know not much about them. It is remarkable that we know so much of them as we do. The same is true of the more modern reformers and benefactors of their race. None can be an impartial or wise observer of human life but from the vantage ground of what *we* should call voluntary poverty. Of a life of luxury the fruit is luxury, whether in agriculture,

or commerce, or literature, or art. There are nowadays professors of philosophy, but not philosophers. Yet it is admirable to profess because it was once admirable to live. To be a philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts, nor even to found a school, but so to love wisdom as to live, according to its dictates, a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and trust. It is to solve some of the problems of life, not only theoretically, but practically. The success of great scholars and thinkers is commonly a courtier-like success, not kingly, not manly. They make shift to live merely by conformity, practically as their fathers did, and are in no sense the progenitors of a nobler race of men. But why do men degenerate ever? What makes families run out? What is the nature of the luxury which enervates and destroys nations? Are we sure that there is none of it in our own lives? The philosopher is in advance of his age even in the outward form of his life. He is not fed, sheltered, clothed, warmed, like his contemporaries. How can a man be a philosopher and not maintain his vital heat by better methods than other men?

When a man is warmed by the several modes which I have described, what does he want next? Surely not more warmth of the same kind, as more and richer food, larger and more splendid houses, finer and more abundant clothing, more numerous, incessant, and hotter fires, and the like. When he has obtained those things which are necessary to life, there is another alternative than to obtain the superfluities; and that is, to adventure on life now, his vacation from humbler toil having commenced. The soil, it appears, is suited to the seed, for it has sent its radicle downward, and it may now send its shoot upward also with confidence. Why has man

rooted himself thus firmly in the earth, but that he may rise in the same proportion into the heavens above ?—for the nobler plants are valued for the fruit they bear at last in the air and light, far from the ground, and are not treated like the humbler esculents, which, though they may be biennials, are cultivated only till they have perfected their root, and often cut down at top for this purpose, so that most would not know them in their flowering season.

I do not mean to prescribe rules to strong and valiant natures, who will mind their own affairs whether in heaven or hell, and perchance build more magnificently and spend more lavishly than the richest, without ever impoverishing themselves, not knowing how they live,—if, indeed, there are any such, as has been dreamed ; nor to those who find their encouragement and inspiration in precisely the present condition of things, and cherish it with the fondness and enthusiasm of lovers,—and, to some extent, I reckon myself in this number ; I do not speak to those who are well employed, in whatever circumstances, and they know whether they are well employed or not ;—but mainly to the mass of men who are discontented, and idly complaining of the hardness of their lot or of the times, when they might improve them. There are some who complain most energetically and inconsolably of any, because they are, as they say, doing their duty. I also have in my mind that seemingly wealthy, but most terribly impoverished class of all, who have accumulated dross, but know not how to use it, or get rid of it, and thus have forged their own golden or silver fetters.

## THE PROGRESS OF CIVILIZATION

(THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY, 1800-59)

IF we would study with profit the history of our ancestors, we must be constantly on our guard against that delusion which the well-known names of families, places, and offices naturally produce, and must never forget that the country of which we read was a very different country from that in which we live. In every experimental science there is a tendency towards perfection. In every human being there is a wish to ameliorate his own condition. These two principles have often sufficed, even when counteracted by great public calamities and by bad institutions, to carry civilization rapidly forward. No ordinary misfortune, no ordinary misgovernment, will do so much to make a nation wretched, as the constant progress of physical knowledge and the constant effort of every man to better himself will do to make a nation prosperous. It has often been found that profuse expenditure, heavy taxation, absurd commercial restrictions, corrupt tribunals, disastrous wars, seditions, persecutions, conflagrations, inundations, have not been able to destroy capital so fast as the exertions of private citizens have been able to create it. It can easily be proved that, in our own land, the national wealth has, during at least six centuries, been almost uninterruptedly increasing; that it was greater under the Tudors than under the Plantagenets; that it was greater under the Stuarts than under the Tudors; that, in spite of battles, sieges, and confiscations, it was greater on the day of the Restoration

than on the day when the Long Parliament met ; that, in spite of maladministration, of extravagance, of public bankruptcy, of two costly and unsuccessful wars, of the pestilence and of the fire, it was greater on the day of the death of Charles the Second than on the day of his Restoration. This progress, having continued during many ages, became at length, about the middle of the eighteenth century, portentously rapid, and has proceeded, during the nineteenth, with accelerated velocity. In consequence partly of our geographical and partly of our moral position, we have, during several generations, been exempt from evils which have elsewhere impeded the efforts and destroyed the fruits of industry. While every part of the Continent, from Moscow to Lisbon, has been the theatre of bloody and devastating wars, no hostile standard has been seen here but as a trophy. While revolutions have taken place all around us, our government has never once been subverted by violence. During a hundred years there has been in our island no tumult of sufficient importance to be called an insurrection. The law has never been borne down either by popular fury or by regal tyranny. Public credit has been held sacred. The administration of justice has been pure. Even in times which might by Englishmen be justly called evil times, we have enjoyed what almost every other nation in the world would have considered as an ample measure of civil and religious freedom. Every man has felt entire confidence that the state would protect him in the possession of what had been earned by his diligence and hoarded by his self-denial. Under the benignant influence of peace and liberty, science has flourished, and has been applied to practical purposes on a scale never before known. The con-

sequence is that a change to which the history of the old world furnishes no parallel has taken place in our country. Could the England of 1685 be, by some magical process, set before our eyes, we should not know one landscape in a hundred or one building in ten thousand. The country gentleman would not recognize his own fields. The inhabitant of the town would not recognize his own street. Everything has been changed, but the great features of nature, and a few massive and durable works of human art. We might find out Snowdon and Windermere, the Cheddar Cliffs and Beachy Head. We might find out here and there a Norman minster, or a castle which witnessed the Wars of the Roses. But, with such rare exceptions, everything would be strange to us. Many thousands of square miles which are now rich corn land and meadow, intersected by green hedges, and dotted with villages and pleasant country seats, would appear as moors overgrown with furze, or fens abandoned to wild ducks. We should see straggling huts built of wood and covered with thatch, where we now see manufacturing towns and seaports renowned to the farthest ends of the world. The capital itself would shrink to dimensions not much exceeding those of its present suburb on the south of the Thames. Not less strange to us would be the garb and manners of the people, the furniture and the equipages, the interior of the shops and dwellings. Such a change in the state of a nation seems to be at least as well entitled to the notice of a historian as any change of the dynasty or of the ministry.



## THE PRESENT AGE

(WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING, 1780-1842)

IN looking at our age, I am struck, immediately, with one commanding characteristic, and that is, the tendency in all its movements to expansion, to diffusion, to universality. To this I ask your attention. This tendency is directly opposed to the spirit of exclusiveness, restriction, narrowness, monopoly, which has prevailed in past ages. Human action is now freer, more unconfined. All goods, advantages, helps, are more open to all. The privileged petted individual is becoming less, and the human race are becoming more. The multitude is rising from the dust. Once we heard of the few, now of the many; once of the prerogatives of a part, now of the rights of all. We are looking, as never before, through the disguises, envelopments of ranks and classes, to the common nature which is below them; and are beginning to learn that every being who partakes of it has noble powers to cultivate, solemn duties to perform, inalienable rights to assert, a vast destiny to accomplish. The grand idea of humanity, of the importance of man as man, is spreading silently, but surely. Not that the worth of the human being is at all understood as it should be; but the truth is glimmering through the darkness. A faint consciousness of it has seized on the public mind. Even the most abject portions of society are visited by some dreams of a better condition for which they were designed. The grand doctrine, that every human being should have the means of self-culture, of progress in knowledge and virtue, of health, comfort, and happiness, of

exercising the powers and affections of a man ; this is slowly taking its place as the highest social truth. That the world was made for all, and not for a few ; that society is to care for all ; that no human being shall perish but through his own fault ; that the great end of government is to spread a shield over the rights of all ; these propositions are growing into axioms, and the spirit of them is coming forth in all the departments of life.

If we look at the various movements of our age, we shall see in them this tendency to universality and diffusion. Look, first, at science and literature. Where is science now ? Locked up in a few colleges, or royal societies, or inaccessible volumes ? Are its experiments mysteries for a few privileged eyes ? Are its portals guarded by a dark phraseology, which, to the multitude, is a foreign tongue ? No ; science has now left her retreats, her shades, her selected company of votaries, and with familiar tone begun the work of instructing the race. Through the press, discoveries and theories, once the monopoly of philosophers, have become the property of the multitude. Its professors, heard, not long ago, in the university or some narrow school, now speak in the mechanics' institute. The doctrine that the labourer should understand the principles of his art, should be able to explain the laws and processes which he turns to account ; that instead of working as a machine, he should join intelligence to his toil, is no longer listened to as a dream. Science, once the greatest of distinctions, is becoming popular. A lady gives us conversations on chemistry, revealing to the minds of our youth vast laws of the universe, which, fifty years ago, had not dawned on the greatest minds. The school-books of our children contain grand views of the creation. There are parts of our country (the United States) in

which lyceums spring up in almost every village, for the purpose of mutual aid in the study of natural science. The characteristic of our age, then, is not the improvement of science, rapid as this is, so much as its extension to all men.

The same characteristic will appear, if we inquire into the use now made of science. Is it simply a matter of speculation? a topic of discourse? an employment of the intellect? In this case, the multitude, with all their means of instruction, would find in it only a hurried gratification. But one of the distinctions of our time is that science has passed from speculation into life. Indeed, it is not pursued enough for its intellectual and contemplative uses. It is sought as a mighty power, by which nature is not only to be opened to thought, but to be subjected to our needs. It is conferring on us that dominion over earth, sea, and air, which was prophesied in the first command given to man by his Maker; and this dominion is now employed, not to exalt a few, but to multiply the comforts and ornaments of life for the multitude of men. Science has become an inexhaustible mechanician; and by her forges, and mills, and steam cars, and printers' presses, is bestowing on millions not only comforts, but luxuries which were once the distinction of a few.

Another illustration of the tendency of science to expansion and universality may be found in its aims and objects. Science has burst all bonds, and is aiming to comprehend the universe, and thus it multiplies fields of inquiry for all orders of minds. There is no province of nature which it does not invade. Not content with exploring the darkest periods of human history, it goes behind the birth of the human race, and studies the

stupendous changes which our globe experienced for hundreds of centuries, to become prepared for man's abode. Not content with researches into visible nature, it is putting forth all its energies to detect the laws of invisible and imponderable matter. Difficulties only provoke it to new efforts. It would lay open the secrets of the polar ocean, and of untrodden barbarous lands. Above all, it investigates the laws of social progress, of arts, and institutions of government, and political economy, proposing as its great end the alleviation of all human burdens, the weal of all the members of the human race. In truth, nothing is more characteristic of our age than the vast range of inquiry which is opening more and more to the multitude of men. Thought frees the old bounds to which men used to confine themselves. It holds nothing too sacred for investigation. It calls the past to account, and treats hoary opinions as if they were of yesterday's growth. No reverence drives it back. No great name terrifies it. The foundations of what seems most settled must be explored. Undoubtedly this is a perilous tendency. Men forget the limits of their powers. They question the Infinite, the Unsearchable, with an audacious self-reliance. They shock pious and revering minds, and rush into an extravagance of doubt, more unphilosophical and foolish than the weakest credulity. Still, in this dangerous wildness, we see what I am stating, the tendency to expansion in the movements of thought.

I have hitherto spoken of science, and what is true of science is still more true of literature. Books are now placed within reach of all. Works once too costly except for the opulent are now to be found on the labourer's shelf. Genius sends its light into cottages. The great names of literature are become household words among

the crowd. Every party, religious or political, scatters its sheets on all the winds. We may lament, and too justly, the small comparative benefit as yet accomplished by this agency ; but this ought not to surprise or discourage us. In our present stage of improvement, books of little worth, deficient in taste and judgement, and ministering to men's prejudices and passions, will almost certainly be circulated too freely. Men are never very wise and select in the exercise of a new power. Mistake, error, is the discipline through which we advance. It is an undoubted fact, that, silently, books of a higher order are taking the place of the worthless. Happily, the instability of the human mind works sometimes for good as well as evil : men grow tired at length even of amusements. Works of fiction cease to interest them, and they turn from novels to books, which, having their origin in deep principles of our nature, retain their hold of the human mind for ages. At any rate, we see in the present diffusion of literature the tendency to universality of which I have spoken.

The remarks now made on literature might be extended to the fine arts. In these we see, too, the tendency to universality. It is said that the spirit of the great artists has died out ; but the taste for their works is spreading. By the improvements of engraving, and the invention of casts, the genius of the great masters is going abroad. Their conceptions are no longer pent up in galleries open to but few, but meet us in our homes, and are the household pleasures of millions. Works, designed for the halls and eyes of emperors, popes, and nobles, find their way, in no poor representations, into humble dwellings, and sometimes give a consciousness of kindred powers to the child of poverty. The art of drawing, which lies at

the foundation of most of the fine arts, and is the best education of the eye for nature, is becoming a branch of common education, and in some countries is taught in schools to which all classes are admitted.

I am reminded, by this remark, of the most striking feature of our times, and showing its tendency to universality, and that is, the unparalleled and constantly-accelerated diffusion of education. This greatest of arts, as yet little understood, is making sure progress, because its principles are more and more sought in the common nature of man ; and the great truth is spreading that every man has a right to its aid. Accordingly, education is becoming the work of nations. Even in the despotic governments of Europe, schools are open for every child without distinction ; and not only the elements of reading and writing, but music and drawing are taught, and a foundation is laid for future progress in history, geography, and physical science. The greatest minds are at work on popular education. The revenues of states are applied most liberally, not to the universities for the few, but to the common schools. Undoubtedly, much remains to be done ; especially a new rank in society is to be given to the teacher ; but even in this respect a revolution has commenced, and we are beginning to look on the guides of the young as the chief benefactors of mankind.

Thus we see, in the intellectual movements of our times, the tendency to expansion, to universality ; and this must continue. It is not an accident, or an inexplicable result, or a violence on nature ; it is founded in eternal truth. Every mind was made for growth, for knowledge ; and its nature is sinned against when it is doomed to ignorance. The divine gift of intelligence was bestowed

for higher uses than bodily labour, than to make hewers of wood, drawers of water, ploughmen, or servants. Every being, so gifted, is intended to acquaint himself with God and His works, and to perform wisely and disinterestedly the duties of life. Accordingly, when we see the multitude of men beginning to thirst for knowledge, for intellectual action, for something more than animal life, we see the great design of nature about to be accomplished ; and society, having received this impulse, will never rest till it shall have taken such a form as will place within every man's reach the means of intellectual culture. This is the revolution to which we are tending ; and without this all outward political changes would be but children's play, leaving the great work of society yet to be done.

## THE ANALYSIS OF AN ESSAY

The clear analysis of an Essay demands considerable power of thought. What it implies can be stated under four headings, which are given in the order they naturally occupy in the process of extracting from a piece of English its essential meaning.

First : Ask yourself what is the central idea of the essay as a whole, and express it briefly, if possible in a single sentence.

Second : Seize the salient points made by the author, omitting all that is redundant, rhetorical, or merely illustrative : disentangle the essential thought from the verbiage.

Third : Understand the general drift of the argument, and emphasize the connexion between its different parts, especially the due subordination of thoughts.

Fourth : Put the result into logical shape, possibly recasting the whole. As far as possible, make your own arrangement of the subject-matter *under headings and sub-headings*, and use your own words. Your analysis should be of such scope that it can easily be understood at a glance ; in the case of the majority of the essays in this book it can be comprised in a page of about this size.



## I.—THE PURPOSE OF ART (HERBERT SPENCER)—No. 1

Central Idea. It is the function of Art (as illustrated in drama, poetry, music, and painting) primarily to satisfy the emotional, rather than the intellectual elements of mind: failure to understand this gives rise to false theories of the purpose of Art.

- I. The erroneous identification of mind with intellect (among other results) vitiates our ideas of works of art (i. e. works of creative imagination), by causing us to *undervalue the emotional*, and *over-value the intellectual element in mind*.

This tendency is displayed in connexion with

- (a) Drama: the question has been 'Is it instructive?' not 'Is it pleasurable?'
- (b) Poetry: Matthew Arnold represents it as the poet's office to communicate certain ideas, not to arouse certain sentiments.
- (c) Pictorial Art: Holman Hunt makes the aim education rather than the satisfaction of feeling.
- (d) Music: Wagner's theory was that the purpose of music is to teach.

- II. *This error is due to the assigning of wrong functions to the intellect.*

Intellectual perceptions are needful for making possible pleasurable feelings (e. g. in music), but simply as means to an end: they are not, but the emotional element is the end itself.

At any given moment, the effort to appreciate intellectually detracts from emotional satisfaction. He who rightly enjoys Art is more a passive recipient than an active interpreter (though, incidentally, it is more profitable to have stirred in one the finer than the coarser emotions).

## II.—THE POPULAR POET (HARE)—No. 10

Central Idea. The popular poet does not try to lift his reader to the ideal or to hold him with a permanent moral interest; but by means of a story, incidents, novelty, and transitory interests adapts his poetry to the capacities of the ordinary reader.

I. *The 'popular' poet must (not be intensely poetical, but) produce plenty of poetry suited to the capacities of ordinary readers. This appears to be proved by the popularity of*

(a) Wordsworth's *Lines written while sailing in a boat at Evening*, which in sentiment and fancy do not call for any stretch of imagination and thought.

(b) Landor's *Conversation between General Kleber and some French Officers*.

II. *He should make much of the attraction of a story.*

(a) All are interested in mere incidents, especially those connected with death and love.

(b) The persons whom the incidents befall need not have any special depth of character or passion: this explains the success of ordinary novels.

The popular poet, instead of lifting his reader into an ideal world, brings down his world to the reader.

III. *The 'popular' poet will be an inferior poet: for love of incident is a characteristic not only of popular, but of declining poetry.*

*Good poetry has for subject-matter the impulses and actions of man, and external events which follow one another according to law: the interest is moral and permanent.*

*Inferior (or popular) poetry has as subject-matter strange incidents: the interest is simply strangeness, and is transitory.*

## III.—OF TRUTH (BACON)—No. 20

Central Idea. Truth, though it is unattractive to man in his fallen state, when considered either philosophically or in relation to practical life is really his chief good.

*The Unattractiveness of Truth.*

Certain sects of philosophers deliberately disowned fixed truth because

- (a) It is hard to discover.
- (b) It is imperative when discovered.
- (c) Man's fallen nature loves its reverse, a lie [possibly because truth does not look so well as a lie]—or at least a half-lie [fiction is not a harmful form of lie].

II. *Truth, considered philosophically, the chief good of human nature.*

- (a) The search for it, knowledge of it, and belief in it are man's chief good, as it was the last gift of the Creator, who gave men reason that they might see it.
- (b) The highest pleasure is to know the truth, and recognize error, provided it be with pity.

III. *Truth considered in relation to practical life.*

*Truthful dealing* makes a man honourable.

*False dealing*

- (a) Is a disgrace in the eyes of our fellow men.
- (b) Is an insult to God, whose disapproval the liar regards less than that of men.
- (c) Will finally bring God's judgement on the earth.

[N.B. Bacon misunderstands the word *faith*, by which Christ meant *faith in Himself*, not *honest dealing*.]

## IV.—OF REVENGE (BACON)—No. 22

Central Idea. For many reasons Revenge is to be deprecated, but it is least immoral when above-board, and when the law provides no remedy.

I. *Private Revenge.*

A. Is to be deprecated because it

- (a) Supersedes law.
- (b) Is inferior to forgiveness.
- (c) Wastes thought on the past.
- (d) Exacts penalties from the natural self-preference or the mere spitefulness of the aggressor.
- (e) Prevents sense of wrong from healing.

B. Though to be deprecated, is most tolerable when

- (a) The law provides no remedy.
- (b) Revenge is open and acknowledged.

[Duke Cosmus is not right in condoning revenge taken on friends: Job is wiser in expecting evil as well as good from friends.]

II. *Public Revenge.*

Is generally successful.

## V.—OF FRIENDSHIP (BACON)—No. 23

Central Idea. Friendship, to which a man is instinctively prone, confers great benefits upon him, by helping him to regulate his emotions and understand himself, and by assisting him in practical affairs.

*Introduction.* To take pleasure in solitude, i. e. not to feel the need of friends, is contrary to human nature. Friendship is both a natural instinct and productive of advantages, especially of the three following :

I. *It regulates emotions*, by purging the mind through confidences.

(a) A positive example. This is especially true in the case of monarchs, who, though their position raises them above equals, in spite of tendencies to self-seeking feel compelled to make friends with whom to share their troubles: e.g. Sulla makes a confidant of Pompey, Caesar of Decius Brutus, Augustus of Agrippa.

(b) A negative example. The reverse is instanced by the harm sustained by Duke Charles of Burgundy and Louis XI : *Cor ne edito*.

The giving of confidences doubles joys and halves griefs.

In a word, *Friendship gives peace in the affections*.

II. *It clarifies thought*, by opening the understanding.

(a) Actively. The process of communicating ideas to a friend helps a man to understand himself.

(b) Passively. Receiving thoughtful advice from a friend helps a man to see his true position. The giver of advice is not blinded by the same habits and feelings as the recipient. In respect both of (i) moral conduct and (ii) business affairs, a friend's counsel is of value.

In a word, *Friendship supports judgement*.

III. *It often gives practical help*.

There are many things a man wants done that he cannot do himself, but that a friend can do for him.

In a word, *Friendship acts by deputy*.

## VI.—THE DIGNITY OF LABOUR (CARLYLE)—No. 26

Central Idea. Work, which makes man conversant with the laws of nature and provides him with an end for effort, ennobles and perfects him.

I. *Work is noble and ennobling.*

(a) It begets hope and banishes despair.

(b) It teaches a man truth, because he who works must adapt himself to the laws of nature, and they are truth.

Hence, 'Know thy work and do it' is a divine saying.

['Know thyself' is a fallacious saying.]

II. *Work perfects a man.*

While helping to create material order out of disorder, the workman gives order to his character: the effect of work is to make a man's faculties operate smoothly together.

III. *Work brings Happiness.*

(a) It provides an end for effort.

(b) The effect of a right use of power is to clear away remorse and despair, and to produce knowledge of all sorts (self-knowledge included), knowledge of the best sort, that is, not merely theoretical, but that which stands the test of practice. 'Doubt can be ended by action alone.'

IV. *Work is sacred.*

To put forth effort, whether it be physical, mental, or spiritual, is true worship.

*Laborare est Orare.*

## VII.—OF EMPIRE (BACON)—No. 30

[*Empire* here means *Kingship*.]

Central Idea. A king, whose position lays him open to certain weaknesses, and brings him necessarily into contact with many sorts of men, needs foresight and tact, but especially self-restraint.

- I. *The position of kings affects their characters*, through their
  - (a) Desires. They have little to desire, hence (i) they amuse themselves with trifles, e. g. Nero ; (ii) turn superstitious or melancholy ; e. g. Alexander the Great.
  - (b) Fears. They have much to fear.
- II. *The mixture of qualities kings should possess*.
  - (a) An even temper, so that authority is never unduly tightened or relaxed.
  - (b) Foresight which can determine principles of action for preventing dangerous positions, rather than skill in escaping and rectifying them.
- III. *The chief relations of kings with other people*.
  - (a) Neighbouring princes : to secure balance of power, e. g. Henry VIII, Francis I, and Charles V.
  - (b) Wives : to avoid their hostility and plots, e. g. Edward II.
  - (c) Children : to avoid treating them with suspicion, e. g. Constantine and Crispus.
  - (d) Bishops : to keep them in their place, especially when supported by foreign authority or elected by the people.
  - (e) Nobility :
    - (i) Greater nobility : to keep them at a safe distance, but not depress them.
    - (ii) Lesser nobility : to give them latitude, as they are a counterpoise to greater nobles and control the people.
  - (f) Merchants : not to overtax them in order to secure revenue.
  - (g) Commons : not to interfere with their religion, customs, or means of livelihood.
  - (h) Soldiers : not to let them live in concentration, nor accustom them to money presents.
- IV. *Summary*.

Two mottoes sum up a king's duties :

- (i) *Memento quod es homo*. A check on the use of power.
- (ii) *Memento quod es vice dei*. A check on the use of will.

## VIII.—OF GREATNESS (COWLEY)—No. 31

[By 'Greatness' Cowley means the externals of high position, grandeur, pomp, and circumstance.]

General Idea. The grandeur which accompanies high position, though attractive to the majority of mankind, brings with it trouble, discontent, physical suffering, and moral danger.

*Introduction.* Reflections on a saying of Montaigne disparaging greatness.

- I. *Cowley's personal preference for small things : but*
- II. *The majority's preference for great things, at any rate in some matters, if not in all.*
- III. *The disadvantages of greatness : among others*
  - (a) Its ostentation is cumbersome: (Most princes would forgo it, as is proved by their leaning towards trivial recreations, e. g. Nero, Claudius, and others) ; further, the solid advantages of greatness may be had with comparatively small means.
  - (b) It is accompanied by slavery, worry, danger, and guilt (whereas a humble estate means freedom, quiet, security, and innocence).
  - (c) It is often in want and distress : e. g. the King of Cappadocia.
  - (d) It is never content : e. g. Oliver Cromwell. This is because greatness does not exist in nature, but only in imagination. It is purely relative.



IX.—ON THE IGNORANCE OF THE LEARNED (HAZLITT)—  
No. 40

Central Idea. As compared with the man of first-hand practical experience, the learned man (most often classically trained, depending on memory, and apprehending words rather than things) has not a creative mind, but passively absorbs the ideas of others.

I. *The limitations of the learned.*

The learned, whether (a) authors or (b) readers, have few ideas. Busy in absorbing other men's thoughts, from a mere horror of a vacuum, they tend to have no thoughts of their own. This is due largely to

II. *The education of the learned :*

i. e. a classical education, which has its dangers, in that it does not make a demand on the highest faculties, but chiefly on *memory*, the faculty which apprehends *words* rather than *things*.

III. *Learning and common-sense.*

It is important to distinguish between

- (a) Learning, which is knowledge through books and second-hand sources; and
- (b) Practical knowledge, which is knowledge of that which is before us and about us.

## X.—OF STUDIES (FRANCIS BACON)—No. 41

Central Idea. When pursued reasonably, reading (as compared with conversation and writing) produces knowledge; and certain studies develop certain mental faculties, and cure certain mental defects.

I. *The use and abuse of studies.*

- (a) Use : (i) for amusement.
- (ii) for improvement of style in speech or writing.
- (iii) for the formation of judgement.
- (b) Abuse by way of excess turns
  - (i) Amusement into idleness.
  - (ii) Good style into affectation.
  - (iii) Practical judgement into unreal pedantry.

II. *Classification of men according to their attitude towards studies.*

- (a) Manual workers despise them.
- (b) Foolish men wonder at them.
- (c) Wise (i. e. observant) men use them to train their judgement.

III. *Classification of books according to the amount of attention they demand.*

- (a) Some to be dipped into.
- (b) Some to be read hastily.
- (c) A few to be studied slowly and carefully.
- (d) Unimportant books may be dealt with in extracts made by others.

IV. *Comparative mental effect of reading, conversation, and writing.*

- (a) Reading produces knowledge.
- (b) Conversation produces readiness in the use of it.
- (c) Writing produces accuracy in the use of it.

V. *Classification of studies as producers of mental powers and remedies for mental defects.*

- (a) Producers of powers :
  - (1) History begets practical wisdom.
  - (2) Poetry begets imagination.
  - (3) Mathematics begets powers of inference.
  - (4) Natural philosophy begets depth.
  - (5) Ethics begets seriousness.
  - (6) Logic and rhetoric beget power of argument.
- (b) Remedies of mental defects :
  - (1) Mathematics cures want of concentration.
  - (2) Mediaeval philosophy cures inability to distinguish.
  - (3) Law cases cure poverty of evidence and illustration.

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<sup>1</sup> This index is meant to be a help to the young essayist in search of a train of thought or illustrations; but *it must be used with discretion*, i.e. not as a substitute for, but as a stimulus to, thought.

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